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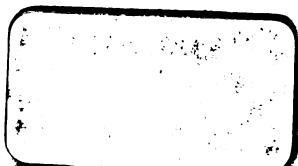
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THE
STRANGER IN ENGLAND;

OR,
Travels in Great Britain.

CONTAINING
REMARKS
ON THE
POLITICS—LAWS—MANNERS—CUSTOMS—AND DIS-
TINGUISHED CHARACTERS OF THAT COUNTRY;
AND CHIEFLY ITS
METROPOLIS:

WITH
CRITICISMS ON THE STAGE.

THE WHOLE INTERSPERSED WITH A VARIETY OF
CHARACTERISTIC ANECDOTES.

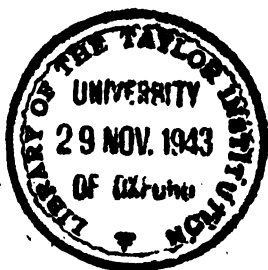
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1807.



TRAVELS

IN

GREAT BRITAIN, &c.

CHAP I.

THE House of Commons—Its Privileges—Qualities of an Orator described—Ministerial Corruption—Parliamentary Ambition laudable—Mr. Sheridan's Speech in 1802—Sketches of celebrated Statesmen and Orators—Mr. Nicolls—Lord Belgrave—Mr. Fox—Mr. Wilberforce—Lord Hawkesbury—Mr. Erskine—Mr. Grey—Mr. Addington—Mr. Pitt—Mr. Sheridan.

THE House of Commons is little calculated to impress a stranger with ideas of grandeur and magnificence; indeed he will scarcely be able to persuade himself, that it is a structure set apart for the representatives of a floq-

rishing empire. It is extremely confined; the gallery appropriated to strangers, is very small, and always crowded with spectators, who anxiously assemble to hear the debates. This indulgence, however, requires an inexhaustible fund of patience. I remember to have attended a party of friends thither one morning; we waited five hours before the debate opened, and remained two hours and an half more, standing in the door-way, before we could procure a seat. At length, exhausted with fatigue, I was obliged to leave the house. My friends, next day, reproached me for my want of perseverance; declaring they had patiently sat out the debate, which occupied nine hours and an half.

Extraordinary talents are essential to the reputation of a parliamentary orator: the most classical language,

the finest periods, or the most beautiful tropes, are insufficient in themselves to procure celebrity. An uncommon presence of mind, a calm dispassionate reply, a liberality of opinion superior to most men, are the grand requisites to foil an opponent; while sound judgment, and a degree of genius bordering on inspiration, are indispensable qualifications. An orator must be able to take a rapid, but comprehensive view of the subject in debate; he must enter into the detail with confidence, yet calmly: the external ornaments of declamation, as expressive gesticulation, a musical voice, finely modulated tones, &c. are scarcely looked for. Messrs. Fox, Sheridan, Pitt, Erskine, and Grey, make no pretension to these embellishments.

It has been asserted by French as well as German authors, that the Par-

liament is made up of abject slaves, who blindly obey the minister's nod, or servilely league with placemen: but if that were the case, it appears to me incomprehensible, that a minister should take the trouble to employ all his energies to obtain a majority; or that the Opposition, consisting of men of the most distinguished talents of the country, should persevere if nothing was to be hoped. These superficial observers detach all merit from the performers on a theatre which they suppose opened for the delusion of the public; while others, not a whit more sagacious, contend, that every parliamentary contest is little more than a party-struggle for places and pensions; that a minister only labours at popularity to retain his office, and Opposition only struggle against him to obtain it for themselves. But how, it may be asked, do Opposition succeed in their views?

With them, corruption is out of the question. By superiority of talent, and by that only, they struggle to merit the sanction of public opinion; so that the triumph of Opposition is a decided proof, that ministerial consequence in England is not supported by needy or corrupted partisans, but by public opinion, the real sovereign of the people.

Parliamentary debates, therefore, are not a mere ceremonial, as shallow observers would persuade us, but incontrovertible proofs of the greatness of the nation; which, among its variety of valuable privileges, boasts this distinguished freedom.

The dignity of a representative in Parliament rises with the prosperity of the empire; he knows no object more worthy his ambition than the free suffrages of his constituents; and

the patriot devotes his talents to the attainment of public confidence.

In all ages, and among all nations, there have been miscreants ready to sell their conscience to the highest bidder; but in a free country, such characters can only appear in a subordinate situation; and can only be dangerous when they possess an heterogeneous mixture of splendid virtues and concealed vices, and thereby dazzle the multitude. A contemptible knave can never act a conspicuous part in the house, while public opinion, and the liberty of the press, rank among the prerogatives of the people. No kingdom could preserve its prosperity, if the leaders of parties did not spurn at self-interest, the arch-destroyer of all that is great and good.

Of this the French Revolution has afforded a very ample proof. A manu-

script may be seen in the British Museum, at London, containing a list of pensions granted by the English government to French ministers of state. A more exalted ambition sways the British statesman, and displays itself in the increasing greatness of the nation. Such a document could never be found in the archives of the French court: the example, nay, the mere words of a British senator, can at any time influence the political disposition of the nation: and with so direct a path to power, who would embroil himself in the difficulties of a bye-road?

I was at Edinburgh in the December of 1802, and had a particular opportunity of witnessing the influence of strong and powerful declamation. Mr. Sheridan, in a most able and animated speech, had represented the public spirit of the nation to be its best

safeguard; and supported the opinion with a degree of inspiration, energy, and fire, that would have done honour to the patriotism of the most illustrious Roman, in the zenith of republican power.

On the receipt of the newspapers, detailing this famous speech, the whole city was as it were electrified: it became the universal topic; and the most enthusiastic applause was bestowed on the speaker. Every one found his sentiments the echo of their own, and two days after, in my way to town, I perceived the impression was general. In London, I found its operation still more powerful; the spirit of parties began to pause, and unanimity began to expand.

Such were the extraordinary effects of a single speech, and so well is this influence understood, that the Opposition will frequently make motions

which they know they cannot possibly carry, merely for the purpose of submitting strong opinions on the subject to the public.

In May, 1802, a motion was made in the Commons to return thanks to his Majesty for the dismissal of Mr. Pitt. Every one was perfectly aware the motion would not be carried ; but the Opposition succeeded in conveying to the people, by this means, the censure and ridicule which they attached to his administration. I was present at this debate ; the question was warmly argued by all the talents of both parties, and excited considerable public interest.

The motion originated with Mr. Nicolls ; and whatever might have been wanting in rhetorical ornament or pathos, was supplied by a degree of zeal and good-natured naïveté, that carried with it immediate conviction.

He expatiated at large on the general inconsistency of the ex-minister's conduct, on his want of plan, and on the errors of the coalition. Here he certainly opened a vast field for animadversion; for it is certain no period in modern history can produce such a complication of fatalities, as those which have marked the politics of the present war. He accused Mr. Pitt with having transgressed three rules laid down by Machiavel, as inseparable from the interests of a statesman: these were, "Never to place confidence in the information of emigrants, whom he describes as the slaves of self-interest, and the dupes of prejudice;—never to expect a successful issue from an invasion depending on the existing discord of parties in the enemy's country;—and never to anticipate a triumph founded on the bankruptcy of a rival."

Lord Belgrave rose in reply, not only to defend Mr. Pitt, but to pass a panegyric on his administration. His Lordship evinced greater powers of oratory than his opponent; but he did not possess that penetrating warmth which flows from the heart. He appeared rather to have studied his speech, like a school-boy. The reply was not apposite; and the periods were more indebted to rule than argument. He concluded with proposing an amendment, "That it was the opinion of the house, that the nation was indebted for its present prosperity, to the wisdom, energy, and perseverance of the late administration." This amendment was seconded by Mr. Thornton, the banker.

Mr. Grey next rose, and declared the proposed amendment to be altogether unparliamentary. It did not tend to amend the original motion, but

constituted in itself a new and contradictory motion. The Speaker, however, declared Lord Belgrave to be correct.

Mr. Fox contended, that the object in debate, was not the substance, but the form of the motion; in which case, the proposed amendment could not in his opinion be admitted. These few words were pronounced with a rapidity of utterance and vehemence of expression, such as I had never before witnessed in a public speaker.

I afterwards frequently heard this great statesman in the house, and invariably noticed the extreme emphasis with which he marks even the most trifling things. His voice is by no means pleasing, and the flow of his ideas, like a torrent, hurries on his speech so violently, that he is incapable of modulating his delivery; but in defiance of this defect, every

impartial mind will allow, that Mr. Fox's abilities not only occupy a distinguished rank among his cotemporaries, but will maintain that pre-eminence in the page of history among future ages. The extraordinary compass of his mind never forsakes him when any important question occupies the attention of the house; and however other politicians may develop the question, still Mr. Fox discovers new lights; which he illustrates with all the ability of profound genius, assisted by keen judgment, long experience, and solid acquirements.

At the close of the argument alluded to, Mr. Fox was uncommonly great. When the most eminent speakers had exhausted themselves, he combined the whole business of the day in one comprehensive point of view, and interwove, with infinite skill, the prominent features of the state of Europe

during the last century, in the picture he drew of the present times.

Among the speakers I shall point out, on the ministerial side, Mr. Wilberforce and Lord Hawkesbury: the former speaks fluently, and on the spur of the moment; his voice is weak, though his delivery is not devoid of impression or energy. The latter is much looked up to for the solidity of his arguments: very few, I believe, can equal him as to method; he introduces light and shade with the skill of a master, and never loses his temper. His speeches are remarkable for their logical perspicuity, but free from the embellishments of fancy; he would, therefore, be considered an inelegant orator, if the extent of his knowledge and the fluency of his delivery, did not compensate for the absent beauties of diction.

On the part of the Opposition, Mr.

Erskine* has acquired a fame which he well deserves; his countenance is dignified and expressive, his voice powerful and harmonious.

Mr. Grey†, on the same side, is an excellent speaker, lively and ardent; he is not possessed of grace or elegance, but what he wants in the latter, he supplies in energy; he never seeks to captivate by sweetness, but is sure to take the passions by storm. The interest he takes in every subject, and the zeal with which he canvasses it, carries every thing before it. His delivery is fluent, and his argument skilful. He is one of those orators, who by the force of great ideas, attain the summit of observation, whence they may take a comprehensive view of the political world.

England has always surpassed other

* Now Lord Erskine.

† Now Lord Howick.

countries in the number and celebrity of her statesmen ; and an opportunity offers of introducing the reader to a modern book, where he may survey portraits, correctly and ably drawn, of these distinguished persons.

“ *Public Characters*,” a periodical work, by an anonymous writer, has been judiciously compiled for this purpose. The author has, however, been censured by some of the anonymous critics for bestowing on his characters too much indiscriminate praise ; but he defends himself by alledging, that he admits none but estimable personages into his work.

An Englishman will not, and a foreigner cannot, expose the secret history of the cabinet. I shall, however, attempt some remarks on the leading members of the present House of Commons, chiefly collected from the preceding work, and partly from

private communications of the highest respectability.

Mr. Addington*, the successor of Mr. Pitt, came into the ministry at a period when extraordinary exertion alone could acquire popularity. The nation had resolved on peace at any rate; the new minister complied with their wishes in this particular, abolished several grievous taxes, and became for a few weeks the idol of the people. Mr. Pitt was said to support him, and it is, I believe, certain, that the leading measures of the new administration, were, in a certain degree, the offspring of the ex-minister's counsel.

In the mean time the Opposition, who dreaded the return to power of their formidable rival, winked at the weakness displayed by the minister; while lord Hawkesbury watched every

* Now Lord Sidmouth.

movement, and prevented him from committing any gross errors.

It would, however, be unjust to assert, that Mr. Addington is devoid of great merit, though it is evident his powers were unequal to the critical times in which he governed.

Of his want of energy, Mr. Addington is so sensible, that he studies to effect by mildness what he is unable to achieve by personal prowess. By these means he gained over a leading member of Opposition, Mr. Tierney, who is supposed to possess abilities as a financier; and it is presumed, that Messrs. Fox, Sheridan, and Grey, will follow him to the treasury-bench. This has induced the adherents of Mr. Pitt, who are daily increasing, to sound the alarum-bell!

Mr. Addington speaks with facility, and with great dignity and elegance.

Mr. Fox does not now (1802)

possess the confidence of the people in so unlimited a degree as at some other periods of his life. His brilliant career, as a statesman, commenced in the ministerial interest; he afterwards sided with that distinguished Opposition which opposed the American war, and came with them into power. On the dissolution of the ministry of which he formed a part, he again joined the Opposition, and afterwards coalesced with lord North. That administration being turned out, Mr. Fox once more returned to his old friends, with whom he has ever since continued a firm and staunch adherent. His connection with lord North had nearly proved fatal to his popularity; but he soon regained the public confidence, and by the unwearied exertion of his transcendent abilities, continues the admired leader of a formidable party, comprising all the New

and the greater part of the Old Whigs.

To judge from the general tenor of Mr. Fox's expressions, it would appear that he inclined more to the *New* than the *Old* Whigs; but since his return from France he has been more friendly in his attachment to the latter, and less violent against the ministerial party.

Mr. Fox is not without the infirmities of human nature, but his passions, whatever their tendency, have never disgraced his public character. His mind is superior to the slightest attachment of self-interest; and the engaging manners he exhibits in private life, have secured him a great number of warm friends, who, in the enthusiasm of attachment, pronounce the Honourable Charles James Fox, to be the most amiable, as well as the most distinguished, man of his age.

Mr. Pitt is less beloved and less revered than Mr. Fox. His political existence has been one continued chain of unshaken perseverance and untoward events. Extraordinary firmness, approaching to obstinacy; an undaunted spirit, which approximates to insolence; an inexhaustible perseverance, in bad as well as in good measures, have invariably marked his conduct; and never for one moment forsook him, even in the most tempestuous era of his administration. These qualities, which partake strongly both of vices and virtues, are viewed by the Opposition only in their former character. His faults are those which, from time immemorial, have been ascribed to all active spirits: but it must be confessed that Mr. Pitt has a forbidding hauteur in his manner, which also influences his actions. He disdains to employ artifices, either justifiable

or unjustifiable, to obtain popularity. He has been alternately detested and beloved by the nation; and no minister ever had warmer partisans, or more inveterate enemies, than himself: the one propose to erect statues to his virtues, the other propose a scaffold for his crimes; yet, on the whole, the majority of the people feel and acknowledge how much they owe to his prompt and decisive talents at an epoch like the present.

The patriotic song* written in honour of Mr. Pitt, is still sung on his birthday; which, as well as that of Mr. Fox, like national festivals, are celebrated throughout the United Kingdom.

The most violent opponents of Mr. Pitt, namely, Messrs. Fox, Sheridan, and Grey, have repeatedly borne tes-

* "If hush'd the loud whirlwind that ruffled the deep," &c.

timony to his extraordinary talents. Mr. Grey declared in the house, that, according to his opinion, no man's capacity in the finance department, could exceed that of Mr. Pitt; and that his mind is as comprehensive as it is enlightened. Every branch of business is familiar to him; and the facility and exactness with which he conducts the most intricate branches of the internal administration, particularly excite the astonishment of those who are able to follow him through the mazes of the subject, and feel the force and solidity of his operations.

Mr. Taylor, of Manchester, a gentleman intimately acquainted with the extended range of British manufactures, was deputed to wait upon Mr. Pitt in behalf of the manufacturers, on some important occasion; when Mr. Pitt, to his amazement, discover-

ed as perfect a knowledge of the subject as he could have expected from a professional character.

If Mr. Pitt could have confined his genius to the internal management of the national interest and welfare, his powerful abilities would most probably have disarmed his enemies. Unfortunately, however, the French Revolution broke out, and the financial became the war minister. His opponents charge him with a total want of plan, during the latter part of his administration, with gross ignorance of all foreign political relations, and his no less faulty, than childish, military operations ; which tarnished the glory of the British arms on the continent.

Appearances are certainly against Mr. Pitt ; but should we not reflect, before we pronounce too hasty a judgment, that a minister is not omnipotent in the cabinet ; that his views of

the political situation of Europe must be regulated by the communications of English ambassadors at the foreign courts; that national prejudices frequently lead these gentlemen astray; that his measures must co-operate with his allies, for whose improvident operations, the English minister stands charged by his opponents?

Mr. Pitt is a stranger to every passion save ambition; and at an age, even when the heated imagination of youth glows with the tenderest impressions, the unsusceptible soul of this statesman was cold to every feeling that did not tend to cherish his favourite propensity.

No minister was ever known to preserve so spotless a character for integrity. On this point he has ever been invulnerable; and when the keen and envenomed shafts of calumny have been aimed at his honesty, they

have invariably recoiled. Uninterruptedly engaged in public business, he neglected his own; in consequence of which, although he has never been an expensive man, he found himself, at the close of his administration, considerably in debt; and was compelled to sell his beautiful seat to do justice to his creditors. He accepted the office of lord warden of the Cinque Ports, which produces about 5000*l.* per ann.; but which is by no means equivalent to his sacrifices, or a recompence for his services.

All who have had the pleasing opportunity of knowing Mr. Pitt in the unreserved circle of his intimate friends, praise his affability, admire his wit, and insist that one of the greatest men in England is likewise the most amiable. His learning is profound; few men understand the classics bet-

ter, or are more deeply versed in the ancients ; but as all men have a weak side, those who cannot point out real deformities in his character, reprobate his attachment to the joys of Bacchus ; in which it is said he partakes with great intemperance.

Among the numerous opponents of Mr. Pitt, no one is more to be feared than Mr. Sheridan ; who, to solid talents, gives all the formidable aids of brilliant wit, and poignant satire. He has been a faithful adherent to Mr. Fox, on all occasions ; and though qualified by genius and oratorical powers, to rank with the first statesman in the kingdom, he wants industry to give importance to such a station ; and his indolence alone reduces him to a secondary situation.

CHAP. X.

Principles of Justice in England—The literal Explanation of the Law—Lord Loughborough—Study of the Law—Inns of Court—Barristers—Serjeants—Benchers—Attornies—Special Pleaders—Counsel—Mr. Erskine—Courts of Chancery and Equity—Public Administration of Justice—Juries—Speedy Termination of Suits at Law—Defects in the general System—Circumstantial Evidence—Anecdote.

RIGID justice, and a literal explanation of the law, are observed in all states where the liberty of the subject is carefully guarded. The English entertain a most exalted idea of public justice; and place an unlimited confidence in the administration of it.

No human power should be permitted to interfere with the strict letter of the law: it demands uncondi-

tional obedience from the people ; and must be unconditionally revered by the judges. If every judge were permitted to interpret the law according to his judgment, it would be extended by one, circumscribed by another, and be subject to such a variety of changes, that the most sacred institutes would not be secure from violation. It may be contended, that a literal explanation of the law must be attended with various disadvantages : certainly ; but they are more than counterbalanced by the national and substantial benefits that arise from it.

In England, it is rare to hear expressions of disapprobation uttered against a judge : different as political opinions are in this country, all parties concur in extolling the laws and the courts of law ; and rely with confidence on the impartiality of their judges, who are at once independent

of the crown, and checked by the liberty and the omnipotence of juries.

During the present reign, the Scotch have crept into the courts of justice in England, but their principles do not exactly accord. Fortunately the liberty of the press watches all their motions, and the juries firmly maintain the privileges of their fellow-citizens.

Lord Loughborough, the present lord chancellor, is from Scotland, and has attempted many deviations from the established system of the English courts. He is extremely eloquent, and possesses extraordinary knowledge of the laws. In his political career, his lordship always enlisted with the minister, and he proved a most able defender of Lord North.

With these principles, it was expected that he would in his judicial

capacity attempt an extension of the laws ; and an opportunity once offered to expose his lordship's propensity that way.

Several persons were charged before him with the crime of high treason. On this head the English laws are very defective. The law of Edward III. declares such only to be traitors as have conspired against the life of the king, or have attempted to wage war against him ; by this law therefore no one could be found guilty of high treason, who had merely projected a plan of rebellion, without producing any actual civil war. Lord Loughborough, however, in his charge to the jury, sought to impress on their minds, " that every action which compelled a state to adopt such measures as were dictated to them, should be considered an absolute intention to stir up war against the king." But

this essay did not succeed; the patriotic firmness of the jury resisted the innovation on the law, and with patriotic spirit they acquitted the prisoners at the bar.

But this resolute adherence to the letter of the law, has multiplied the English acts of parliament to an enormous bulk, and will still increase them. Every new case not expressly laid down requires a particular decision; and in points of obscurity or doubt, the judges rigidly follow the sense which approaches nearest to the literal signification of the terms used; but when precedent has established the judgment to be given, it is irrevocable.

The study of the English laws is rendered extremely difficult by an immensity of long-standing precedents; many of which have been repealed by new and more explanatory

laws. The practitioners however do not take the trouble to fathom this almost impenetrable chaos; the science is usually studied in a very superficial way. Blackstone's Commentaries appear to be their only oracle, and other law authorities are merely dipped into as an extraordinary occasion may require. Of practical authors, Lord Coke has acquired the highest reputation with English courts of justice. A methodical study of the law is unknown here; a student begins with transcribing from different treatises, and afterwards, when his memory has retained knowledge of the most useful forms, he is employed in drafting.

The law-language is barbarous in the extreme, and surpasses even that of Germany, in repetition and unwieldy bulk: an improvement of the style is obviously wanted.

In the middle ages, a corporation of

lawyers founded an academy, they purchased lands, and obtained from government a confirmation of their statutes. The chief privilege, still existing, consists in the right of granting to the students authority to plead at the bar, after having passed the regular probation. Several societies have branched out from the original stock, and the places of their residence are called Inns of Court. The most remarkable among them, are The Temple, Lincoln's Inn, Gray's Inn. The members are severally denominated students, barristers, serjeants, and benchers.

Barristers are those who have been called to the bar ; serjeants those who from a certain residence in an inn of court, have acquired by the statutes a precedence of rank ; and benchers are the seniors of the inn, who regulate and govern the society.

A student pays a certain sum on his admission, and subjects himself to the *severe* law of keeping his commons, i. e. feasting with the benchers during the several terms. On these conditions, he is permitted to take chambers in the inn, and live otherwise as he pleases; no one enquires whether he studies the law, or leads a life of pleasure. The original objects of the society are therefore altogether defeated.

There are three descriptions of lawyers in England, attornies, special pleaders, and counsellors. The first collect and arrange the facts to be disputed: the second consult legal authorities on the case, and prepare it for the inspection of counsel, who plead the cause before the court.

An attorney should be very expert in the language of the law, possess an intimate acquaintance with the

different rules of court, and have good connections and credit. Attornies are brought up by attornies.

A special pleader must be able to turn with facility to all law cases; he is entitled to be called to the bar, but that privilege is usually waved.

A counsellor appears in a more prominent and attractive point of view, than his brethren in the law; he suffers none of the drudgery of an attorney, or the perplexity of a special pleader; he steps at once on a wild field, where enterprise and genius have an opportunity to display themselves, and reap distinguished honours and rewards.

The most conspicuous orators in the House of Commons, were originally barristers. Indeed the courts of law may be called avenues to the cabinet; as eloquence and politics are essential to the practice of both. A counsel is

less anxious to fathom the intricacies of the law, than to exhibit his argument with subtilty and orotorical imposition; he digresses at pleasure, and the more variegated his speech, the more beautiful is it esteemed.

What a strange compound of legal doctrine mingled with moral and political digressions, are to found in Mr. Erskine's celebrated speech on the criminal charges brought against Mr. Paine! Indeed, of all the speeches which have been published of this much admired advocate, whom the English revere as another Cicero, I know only one, which may be considered as a specimen of pure legal discussion. I mean his defence of Stockdale. It was a speech free from those extravagancies, repetitions, cumbrous figures, and other blemishes too frequent in the pleadings of the English bar. Mr. Erskine is however con-

sidered to be a better speaker in the courts of law, than in the House of Commons.

Among the gentlemen of the bar, he as justly maintains a pre-eminence, as Lord Loughborough does on the bench. England, it is said, never had so few great orators in the courts of law as at present; among whom may be named Mr. Law, Mr. Garrow, Mr. Best, Mr. Romilly, Mr. Dallas, and Mr. Percival. In Ireland, Mr. Ponsonby holds the rank that Mr. Erskine does in England; but he is certainly excelled by Mr. Curran, whom I cannot avoid stiling one of the greatest orators of modern days. One of his speeches conveyed to my mind a powerful idea of the wonderful effects recorded of ancient eloquence.

The inns of court are cheerful, and provided with gardens and other conveniencies. The Temple is pleasantly

situated on the banks of the Thames, and resembles a small town. On a Sunday numbers of the city *beau monde* walk in the gardens, which far surpass those of the other inns.

The buildings of Lincoln's Inn and Gray's Inn, are plain, yet dignified ; and they surround large squares much frequented.

The Court of Chancery is the court of equity, where contradictory law opinions and cases of extreme intricacy or doubt are argued. The proceedings of this court differ from all other English courts, and approximate to the German system. A written document is preferred by the plaintiff, to which the defendant gives a written reply, which closes the first stage of the contest. Witnesses are not examined *viva voce*, but by means of written interrogatories, to which they reply at leisure ; this being completed,

a new process issues, which is followed by the decision of the chancellor. There are no juries in this court.

The excellence of the practice of the English laws, is that all trials are heard publicly; that they are concise, and dependant only on the united opinions of twelve men. The galleries of these courts are always crowded with the curious; and there are shorthand writers employed to take down the proceedings, which are detailed, but often with disgraceful partiality, in the newspapers. Thus judges, pleaders, jury, are all under the immediate controul of the public; and this circumstance, no doubt, serves to strengthen the surprising confidence of the people in the impartial administration of justice.

Another advantage however results to the community from the publicity of law proceedings: the laws thereby

are expounded and made familiar to the people. The dignity of the court is also considerably enhanced by a public examination of witnesses, which secures the progress of the law from intrigue or villany. A worthless character who would lie or prevaricate in private, is awed into other sentiments when encircled by the solemnities of a court, and by the eyes and ears of his fellow citizens. The national character is benefited by the practice; it inspires patriotism, and encourages the sentiment, that all are equal in the eye of the law; it preserves too that exalted spirit of independence which exists among the lower classes.

Many a well-bred German would tremble, if he were to undergo a long examination before a numerous assembly. In England, you will hear persons of very inferior rank deliver a

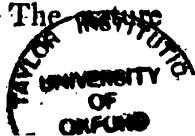
cool, deliberate, systematic train of evidence, with a precision and presence of mind that is astonishing. The judges, jury, and counsel, are individually entitled to examine evidence. The jury is seated between the bench and the bar, as if to preserve the equilibrium of justice. Its institution is sacred to every Englishman, as the palladium of his dearest rights. Every citizen is called upon in his turn, to fill the office and maintain inviolable the strict administration of justice.

To this privilege may also be attributed the dispatch of law-suits. In Germany we have law-suits which survive from one generation to another, and swallow up the property of both parties. The celebrated trial of Warren Hastings was considered in England, as an unheard of instance of "the law's delay." It lasted seven

years and three months, a period which in Germany would appear very moderate. In short, I have seen causes decided in as many days in England, as would occupy as many years in other countries.

It will not be expected that a foreigner can have attained perfect information on so intricate a subject as the present ; and I take this opportunity to avail myself of the remark, and to regret, that no British patriot, who unites a philosophical mind with his knowledge of the existing laws, has favoured the world with a work calculated to correct the imperfect views of foreigners.

Mr. Colquhuon (who is I believe the first writer that has discovered defects in the English laws) has laid particular stress upon the non-existence of decisive measures for the apprehension of criminals. The nature



of the English constitution however would revolt at any innovations of that nature. Inland passports and cards of safety, would not only impose galling chains on commerce, but expose the enviable liberties of the nation to imminent danger! These defects may be an evil; but means of a less alarming nature, might be devised to watch the motions of suspected persons; and the criminal authority might be strengthened by selecting a fit person from every corporation, vested with power to prosecute by law whatever offences were committed within the district.

In London, a society is established, to facilitate the apprehension of delinquents; and such societies exist throughout the kingdom. The police officers should be augmented, and schools instituted for the reception and education of poor children; while

the condition of vagabonds might be improved by public institutions, at which they should be taught to earn a livelihood by honest industry.

These and similar defects, are mere excrescences, which might easily be lopped and corrected. The examination of witnesses is an abuse which particularly calls for reform. The counsel are permitted to employ every imaginable artifice to puzzle and perplex them, thereby aiming to invalidate the evidence by compelling an honest man to contradict himself. The gentlemen of the bar take very unwarrantable liberties; they irritate the passions, ridicule the expressions, and expose the embarrassments of witnesses to public ridicule. This indecent and irregular mode of proceeding, is called cross-examination. I select a few questions, asked by the celebrated Mr. Curran, in Dublin, to

witnesses in two causes where I was present.

The Rev. Mr. William Jackson was tried for high treason at Dublin, in 1795; but being indebted to Mr. Cockayne, an English attorney, in the sum of 300*l.* and Mr. Cockayne having appeared as an evidence against him, Mr. Curran sought to invalidate that gentleman's testimony.

Q. Perhaps you imagine this debt of 300*l.* will be paid you, if, as a loyal subject, you survive Mr. Jackson?

A. I have never considered this business in the way you are pleased to suppose. I never thought it possible Mr. Jackson could have been placed in the situation I find him in; or that I should have been brought hither to give evidence against him.

Q. You practise as an attorney in England?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you expect no remuneration for the trouble you have put yourself to on this occasion?

A. Certainly, I expect to be paid for this as for any other business I am employed in.

Q. You left your business, you say, to appear against your friend and client; and for the usual recompence granted in usual cases?

A. Yes.

At another criminal examination*, the following questions were put to Captain Armstrong, by Mr. Curran:

Q. On your oath I ask you, whether, as a young man, you believe in the existence of God, and of a future retribution?

A. I do.

* The trial of John and Henry Shears, Dublin, 1798.

Q. On your oath, did you, at all times, acknowledge it?

A. I believe I have always done so.

Q. I desire to have a precise answer. Did you always confess your belief in the existence of God, and in a state of future punishment and reward?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Considering your education, you must know the moral obligation of an oath; and you have no doubt considered it, sir?

A. I have always reflected on an oath with a due regard to its solemnity.

Q. By that oath, then, did you never express contrary sentiments on the moral obligation of an oath?

A. As far as I am able to remember, never!

Q. Are you ready, upon your oath, to say, you never expressed an opi-

nion, that an oath was only binding as long as it was convenient?

A. On my oath, I never did.

Q. Did you never ridicule the moral obligation of an oath?

A. Never.

From these questions, it would not be unnatural to infer, that the interrogator had undertaken the office of confessor: and when it is seen that the leading character among the counsel takes these indecent liberties, it will not appear strange if he has many imitators in the subordinate class.

When a person, prosecuted by the attorney-general, is acquitted by his peers, no restitution whatever is made to the sufferer. This cannot be founded in justice. Mr. Hastings is a remarkable instance of this fact. In England his innocence is universally acknowledged: but a strange sort of belief has crept into the continent,

that he bribed the House of Lords. The most passionate New Whig, even, would ridicule this supposition, as an instance of perfect insanity. In a work written by Mr. Logan, which led to the trial of Mr. Stockdale, the bookseller, all doubts are removed as to Mr. Hastings's innocence; and that gentleman is not only considered as having been very ill treated, but also as being one of the worthiest men in England.

The Marquis of Lansdown, who is at the head of the Opposition in the Upper House, and is revered for his patriotic virtues, as well as admired for his political knowledge, has a fine marble bust of Mr. Hastings, which I have seen: the base is inscribed with the words—*INGRATA PATRIA*.

In criminal cases the substantiation of proof is very incorrectly managed. It is either so imperfect as to allow a

heinous offender to escape, or so indecisive that a judge may be hurried into the condemnation of innocence.

A prisoner brought to the bar, is directed by the judge to plead *Not Guilty*: but it frequently happens, that a man who has previously owned his guilt, is acquitted for want of sufficient evidence. On the other hand, circumstantial evidence being admitted, the innocent may suffer; but circumstantial evidence is generally rejected.

Sentence of death was passed, during my residence in London, on a man accused of having drowned his wife. There were, certainly, very strong grounds for suspicion. The parties, it was proved, lived in continual discord: he had been heard to threaten her life; and, I believe, once attempted it; and when the body was dragged out of the water, he dis-

covered excessive alarm. Still the culprit had not confessed the fact; nor were there marks on the body of the deceased, to shew that she had been violently precipitated into the water. The woman, in a momentary frenzy, might have drowned herself. The jury, however, found the prisoner guilty. This verdict caused much inquietude among the people; which might have increased, if the general alarm had not been quieted by the confession of the culprit, the day previous to execution.

On this occasion, a story was circulated of an innocent person's having suffered under similar circumstances, some years ago. A gentleman had been walking with his niece in a field; soon after the niece disappeared, and the uncle was taken into custody. It was proved that the young lady was heard to exclaim, "Dear uncle, do

“not kill me——” and the very next moment a gun went off. On this *circumstantial evidence* the gentleman was found guilty and executed !

About a year after, the young lady returned to England, and the following facts were established. She had been walking in the field with her uncle, whom she earnestly solicited him to consent to her marriage with a young gentleman who paid his addresses to her: and to move him to pity, she had exclaimed, “Dear uncle, do not kill me——*by your denial!*” At that moment, a sportsman in the neighbouring field, discharged his fowling-piece. On the same evening she eloped with her lover.

CHAP. III.

The Beneficence of the English, compared with that of other Nations—St. Bartholomew's Hospital—St. Thomas's Hospital—Guy's Hospital—St. George's Hospital—Bedlam—The Emperor of the World—St. Luke's Hospital—Christ-church Hospital—Foundling Hospital—Asylum—Philanthropic Society—Institution for Deaf and Dumb.

HOWEVER contradictory travellers may have been in their delineation of the English, still humanity and generosity are invariably admitted to adorn the national character. Some few, however, have chosen to doubt their motives, and attribute to vanity and ostentation acts of the most exalted nature.

It is not my intention to enter into

a detail of the many illiberalities of which travellers are guilty on this head, I shall content myself with observing, that this sort of malicious clamour, has in no degree retarded the progress of those excellent institutions, which are a noble and indelible record of British philanthropy.

Without prejudice to other nations, I may safely aver, that their public charities will bear no sort of competition with those of England, either as to number or excellence. Charitable institutions abroad, are, for the most part, the result of former ages, founded in the pious hope of their being a passport to heaven; but in England, they appear the effect of a union of religion and patriotism. I have often visited the most eminent of these charities, and have always left the place with a cheerful and gratified impression on my mind. The tenderness

with which suffering humanity is attended in the hospitals, exceeds description : the agonized patient almost forgets his pains in the respect and attention with which he is treated.

In England, cleanliness is an enviable distinction, universal as it is conspicuous ; but in no situation more attended to than in the hospitals. These buildings are, in their exterior, plain and simple ; but the interior contains every requisite to alleviate the miseries to which human nature is subject.

Bartholomew Hospital is the most extensive and magnificent of these institutions in London. It is capable of receiving fourteen hundred patients ; the number of out-patients is nearly equal. Upon an average, this charity benefits twelve thousand poor persons in course of the year.

This hospital, as well as that of St.

Thomas, in the Borough, was founded by former kings; but they have since been extended and improved by the liberal contributions of private individuals. The latter is a very neat building; it is divided into nineteen wards, containing four hundred and seventy-four beds. About nine thousand persons are annually relieved by this institution.

Contiguous to this building, is Guy's Hospital, founded by Mr. Thomas Guy, bookseller, of London, at the expence of 20,000*l.*: during his life-time, he solely supported the establishment, and at his death he endowed it with 220,000 guineas. There are twelve magnificent wards, which contain four hundred and thirty-two beds. The number of patients relieved every year by this charity, amounts to about eight thousand.

Of the numerous smaller hospitals,

supported by voluntary contributions, that of St. George, at Hyde Park Corner, is particularly worthy of commendation. I have frequently visited the different wards, and always with admiration at the order, neatness, and liberality, which prevail throughout. It contains one hundred and fifty beds; and the number of out-patients is so considerable, that upwards of three thousand necessitous persons are annually benefited thereby.

The most celebrated, though by no means the most excellent, of English hospitals, is Bedlam. It is the largest madhouse in the kingdom, and long maintained a decided pre-eminence; but it now yields to St. Luke's: an establishment justly considered as the first of its kind in Europe.

When I visited Bedlam, it contained two hundred and seventy-five patients; among whom were several very in-

teresting lunatics. In one room I found twelve persons eagerly engaged at cards: these I understood to have been professed gamesters; and that they became mad from their failure in business. Here, and at St. Luke's, I inquired into the general causes of madness; and found that the greater number of these unfortunate inmates had lost their senses either from religious or sensual extravagancies.

Margaret Nicholson and Hatfield are among the patients in Bedlam; but their senses do not appear at all affected. I asked the keeper aloud, whether these persons exhibited any new symptoms of insanity? No reply was made as to Hatfield; but the woman, he told me, possessed a great deal of cunning.

A middle aged man, whose reason fell a sacrifice to his immoderate love of politics, is confined here. I have

conversed with him, and found him inoffensive and entertaining. He calls himself (in imitation of another *certain* madman) EMPEROR OF THE WORLD. Strange as it may appear, he reconciles all the late events which have agitated Europe, with his own fantastical ideas : he views revolutions without discomposure, and without apprehension of his own downfall. He will not acknowledge the king of England.

This self-created monarch has covered his cell with maps, and such drawings. He has designed the place of a magnificent palace, which he purposes to build, the first opportunity, on the banks of the Tigris. With the conduct of Mr. Addington, he professed himself to be much dissatisfied ; and confidentially shewed my friend a paper, which he assured him was the death-warrant of that minister. My

friend took occasion to inquire of his majesty, whether so severe an example might not tend to alienate the affections of his loyal and dutiful subjects. Upon which, the emperor, with excessive dignity of deportment, and an affected mien, replied, "*Presume not, reptiles, to be familiar with your sovereign.*" This unfortunate gentleman performs his character with wonderful effect, and theatrical monarchs would do well to take lessons from him. His countenance is finely expressive ; his eyes, large, eloquent, and wild ; his language luxuriant ; his delivery elegant ; and he possesses a more minute knowledge of the history of Europe than I have usually found in Englishmen. Upon my asking him, how he could possibly govern the whole globe, he replied, " The world is governed by magnetism : the only difficulty is in turning the

poles; that engrosses much of my attention." He is very conversant with the history of the French revolution, and instantly recollected the name of the celebrated senator Gre-goire, when I paid him a second visit in company with that gentleman.

Medical aid is seldom applied to, either at Bedlam, or at St. Luke's. Regularity of diet is considered the more efficacious remedy, together with an unrestricted intercourse among themselves. It is evident that solitude engenders melancholy, and must consequently cherish this particular disease.

St. Luke's was established in the year 1751, from which period to 1802, seven thousand and eighteen insane persons have been received; of which number, five hundred and thirty-four died in the hospital, three thousand and forty-seven had

been cured, six hundred and thirty-one discharged as not coming under the immediate regulations of the house, and two thousand three hundred and eighty-five were declared incurable.

This incomparable charity was originally established on a capital of 40,000*l.* collected by voluntary contribution; that sum in the course of fifty years has been increased to 100,000*l.* of which addition 30,000 guineas were left as a bequest by the late Sir Thomas Clarke. The interest of this capital, amounting to 3933*l.* in 1802, is very unequal to the support of the hospital; but the expences, which in the same year amounted to 7000*l.* were defrayed by the liberality of the public without prejudice to the welfare of any other institution. No other country in Europe can exhibit a single establishment of such

magnitude; and what will foreigners say, when I inform them, that there are in London more than two hundred public institutions supported in the same manner?

By institutions, I mean such charities as are permanent, not dispensaries, or friendly societies, which latter amount to near seven hundred in number. These charities however, in point of numbers, magnitude, and opulence, are far surpassed by the establishments of the same nature which are scattered over all parts of the kingdom.

It will be naturally expected, that the helpless poor are not forgotten in the crowd of objects thus supported by public bounty; and it is with pleasure I relate, that such are the peculiar care of the affluent and benevolent. There are one hundred and seven houses in London, for

the accommodation of the aged and the infirm ; besides establishments in every parish for the reception of those disposed to labour for their support.

Friendly societies are another kind of charity founded by particular classes of people, for the exclusive maintenance of decayed members of their own order. Reduced clergymen, schoolmasters, naval or military officers, merchants, painters, musicians, and mechanics find an asylum in their distress or bankruptcy, that shields them from future want.

In the year 1792 a society, hitherto unique, was opened for the relief of poor authors : this institution however was not established by heroes of the quill ; they of all mortals being most inimical to the welfare of each other.

This sketch of the munificence of

the British nation will, I hope, serve to silence those wretched scribblers, particularly in Germany, who have presumed to declaim against the apathy and selfishness of the English character.

Of establishments for the maintenance and education of poor children, Christ's Hospital is the most ancient. The number admitted is one thousand, of which three hundred are girls, who have latterly been removed to a school at Hertford, supported by the funds of Christ's hospital. The boys are instructed in reading, writing, accounts, and drawing; and are afterwards apprenticed to some trade; forty are brought up to the sea-service, and are taught mathematics, and the nautical sciences. Of this number, ten are annually sent on-board merchant ships. A few of the most distinguished scholars are instructed

in the learned languages, and afterwards sent to college to pursue their studies at the expence of the foundation.

Thirty thousand pounds are annually expended in support of this institution; which, although a royal establishment, is nevertheless much benefited by private subscriptions.

The Foundling Hospital is an establishment of a similar tendency. It was founded at the beginning of the last century, by Mr. Thomas Coram. It now admits four hundred foundlings of both sexes: formerly the number was much greater; but repeated abuses compelled the governors to reduce the establishment, in order to ensure its safety.

This hospital is supported by voluntary contributions, of which 2000*l.* per annum is usually collected at the doors of the chapel. The boys are

brought up to different trades ; but their education here is much inferior to that of Christ's Hospital.

With regard to exterior neatness and elegance, this building may be ranked next to St. Luke's.

The Asylum in St. George's Fields, is for the reception of girls only ; it is not remarkable in its exterior, but is provided with a very neat chapel, where contributions are collected every Sunday. About one hundred girls, whose parents are unknown, are educated here and instructed in female employments : some of the pupils sing prettily, and attract numbers to the chapel. None are received under the age of nine, or kept beyond their fourteenth year, when the governors provide them with situations. But to me, it appears improper, that girls so perfectly unacquainted with the world should be

exposed to the temptations of such a place as London, so early in life.

The Philanthropic Society, for the support and education of the children of persons convicted of capital crimes, is a very distinguished establishment, but certainly capable of much improvement. In considering the object of this institution, we reverence the motives of those whose benevolence planned an undertaking so honourable to the feelings of humanity.

The girls are neatly dressed, and look well and cheerful, nor do they appear to be oppressed with work. They have good rooms and beds, which are kept extremely clean, and they are allowed several hours in the day to amuse themselves: but the boys appear to be less carefully attended, and are made to work at their several trades with some degree of ri-

gour. They are instructed in reading only, and pursue the trades of shoemakers, tailors, ropemakers, printers, book-binders, &c. under proper masters. The proceeds of their labour are applied to the support of the institution, which requires an annual contribution of 4600*l*. It is proposed to add a chapel to the building.

Pupils are not received after the age of fourteen, lest the pernicious effects of early habits might prove fatal to others, as well as to themselves. When I visited them, they were about ninety-five in the whole.

A small institution for the reception of deaf and dumb, has lately been established, in emulation of a similar plan at Paris. Upwards of two thousand subscribers contribute annually at least one guinea each towards its support. It is patronised by the Marquis of Buckingham.

At present, it merely accommodates seventy-five pupils; but it is to be enlarged. Pupils are received from the ages of nine to fourteen, and are placed under the principal tuition of Mr. Watson, whose uncle keeps a private seminary on a small scale at Hackney. These gentlemen claim the honour of being the first masters in this arduous undertaking: but the celebrated Mr. Wallis, more than a century ago, taught deaf and dumb persons at London, not only to read and write, but even to speak with fluency.

Dr. Johnson, in his Journey to the Hebrides, speaks of an excellent institution of this nature, which was conducted at Edinburgh, under the auspices of Mrs. Braidwood; who, to use the learned doctor's expression, "*taught her pupils to hear with their eyes.*" It also appears from history,

that the Spaniards practised this art two hundred years ago, and with a degree of success perhaps never equalled since. From Spain, it is said to have travelled to the Netherlands, and thence to England, where Helmont and Wallis claimed the invention.

At later periods, it became known in France and Germany: but although Mr. Watson must renounce his claim to originality, his activity and zeal will always obtain admiration.

CHAP. IV.

The Beauty of the English—Their Dress—Their unlimited Obedience to Fashion—Its Laws and Despotism—A Sketch of French and English Manners—Reserve of the English—Their National Pride—Their Dislike to Foreigners—Their unsociable Disposition—A Stranger's Distress in London—Domestic Employments of the English Ladies—Their Habits contrasted with those of the French Ladies—Romantic Notions of Matrimony—Conjugal Fidelity—Equality in Society—The Dignity of the Nobility—Their Town-Houses—Country-Seats—Employments—The Birth-Day—Italian Opera—Kensington Gardens—Ranelagh—Pantheon.

I DO not believe that any country in Europe can boast so much general elegance and symmetry of form as Great Britain ; this at least is certain, that one meets with fewer deformed

beings here, than elsewhere. The men however, are better formed than the women; the latter, in particular, are seldom seen with beautifully small feet, a charm common with French women, but not less admired on that account.

The physiognomy of both sexes in England is prepossessing, but devoid of a certain captivating charm. Yet their features are soft, and their eyes beam mildness, but without that bewitching languor that fascinates the beholder; and this may arise from the noble and exquisite form of the nose, which gives infinite dignity to the whole countenance.

The complexion of the men is ruddy, that of the women beautiful in the extreme; the skin is of a most dazzling white, and soft as the cygnet's down: but their mouths are either

large, or not agreeably formed ; and this defect is glaring, notwithstanding their aptitude to smile, when they discover the whitest teeth possible : still these smiles, however pleasing, want that alluring grace which animates the features of the less-beautiful *Parisienne*.

If the stranger is surprised to find beauty so common in England, he will be still more so, when his observation has pointed out to him the equality of exterior which pervades all classes. At Paris, it is easy to discover the citizens, the man of letters, the man of business, the *nouveau-riche*, or the decayed nobleman ; each has his peculiar deportment, and distinguishing apparel : but in England, it is scarcely possible to know a lord from a tradesman, a man of letters from a mechanic ; and this seems to arise

from the sovereignty of fashion in the metropolis.

In other countries, a few trifling individuals alone, obey the fiat of the fickle goddess; but in London, young and old, bow with submission at her shrine. Here the changes of fashion, and the operations of whim, fancy, or caprice, are so various, so rapid, that half the houses in town are completely metamorphosed every two or three years; a circumstance, however, which considerably promotes the prosperity of the nation at large.

In dress, the sway of fashion is still more conspicuous; and the daughters of a citizen vie in splendour with the daughters of a peer. Those eccentric characters, so frequent on the continent, who persist in adhering to the fashions of their youth, would be phenomenons in England; and the

only peculiarity in dress here, is confined to a set exclusively call *fashionables*: their follies are not easily imitated; and the splendour which irradiates them, softens the severity of criticism.

The fashions, however, of this country are simple and harmonious; the shape perhaps does not always please the eye, but the colour is invariably becoming, and the *tout-ensemble* agreeable. Nothing would appear more ridiculous than to see a man half fashionably clad; as the coat is cut, so must the waistcoat and breeches correspond; nor would this suffice, unless the shape of the hat, and exact measure of the boot, were in perfect unison: every reform therefore must be radical. As Germans either do not understand, or will not attend to these minutiae, they must thank themselves, if they find they are

stared at, or ridiculed, as they walk the streets.

It is notorious, that the ladies of France have always disputed "the superiority of taste" with those of England. Without entering into the controversy, it will be proper to observe, each have a peculiar and diametrically opposite way to set off their native charms; and while the former enter a drawing-room, as lightly attired as the statue of a Grecian sculptor, the latter envelope themselves in the foldings of a Spanish mantle. The ladies here are as attentive to the corresponding harmony of their dress, as the gentlemen. Fine muslins are the invariable order of the day; and a lady is never seen abroad without a hat. But a particular style of dress attaches to particular occasions. At church, or at the

theatre, ladies are plainly dressed, and gentlemen appear with round hats. At the opera, the former are full-dressed, wear their hair ornamented; and the latter appear suitably dressed with cocked hats and shoes.

By refined manners, the English do not mean that artificial system of civility which prevails in French society. An English gentleman is distinguished by a dignified deportment, wholly devoid of supercilious consequence; with a mind open, feeling, and ingenuous. Wit and humour are certainly agreeable additions to the composition, but by no means indispensable.

The French reproach the English with reserve, insensibility, and national pride; as if the estimable qualities of a nation consisted in the flippancy of an extravagant compliment, or rapid transformations in religion, arts, sciences, and politics.

Among whom, let me ask, is patriotism, or public spirit, more conspicuous than the English? Whose manners are more pure and simple? What nation, in modern times, exhibits such monuments of benevolence and philanthropy? In domestic life, what people display such affecting proofs of genuine feeling?

But their national pride must be admitted:—it marks their traffic with foreign countries; it is evident in all their writings, historical or political; and the obstinacy with which the abuses and defects in their constitution are openly defended, amounts to an incontrovertible confirmation of the fact. Of late years, however, it is visibly on the decline.

An invincible dislike to foreigners, may be set down as another blemish in the national character; and although it cannot admit of justifica-

tion, still there are instances to palliate the sentiment. How striking the contrast between this reserve and the social disposition of a Frenchman! With the one, every connection is formed with difficulty; with the other, an increase of happiness seems to follow an increase of acquaintance. Even Londoners admit, that the social pleasures of the metropolis are by no means so numerous as they were twenty years ago. There is not a single club in town to which a well-bred stranger can find admission: no museum, no public library, nor any of those excellent institutions with which Paris cheers the wandering stranger. The dulness and gloom which pervade the coffee-houses, drive a foreigner away, who in his distress finds no asylum except the theatres; there, even, his *ennui* is unrelieved,

unless Mr. Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, or Mrs. Jordan, ornament the drama.

The exhibitions may engage a foreigner's attention for a few days; but when he has made their round, he relapses; few, if any, being calculated for repetition. So that, unless he has letters of recommendation, and those numerous, he will find himself as much alone as he would in the midst of an uninhabited desert. A Frenchman, in particular, feels himself miserable in London. I once heard one say to a countryman, "Do you know how I pass my time in this infernal city? I go to bed with the fowls." That a Frenchman, a being of inexhaustible invention, should be compelled to fly to sleep for relief, is an evil that could not happen in any other than an English city!

Travellers have often remarked, that an Englishman's fire-side is the most

amiable point of view in which you can possibly see him ; and that family connections are preserved with the utmost tenderness and exalted simplicity. This is said to originate in the females of the family ; whose domestic dispositions, and cheerful arrangements, diffuse gladness.

Matrimony is considered in England with old-fashioned notions ; here people pledge their hearts with their hands. Their marriages are often romantic ; seldom founded on the mere principles of convenience ; for parents do not constrain the wishes of their children, or seek, by authority, to direct their choice. Still, elopements, unequal matches, or such as separate the parties for ever from their parents, continually occur. These mischievous freaks of love, may, I fear, be attributed to the rage for novel-reading, so fashionable with their young fe-

males, and so baneful in tendency, that the inflamed fancy mocks all dangers, disregards all sacrifices, and, with romantic heroism, bounds over every obstacle to obtain the object of visionary passion.

In novels love is poetically described as capable of removing all differences in rank or fortune; and some of the most distinguished families in the kingdom, are remarkable for having had daughters who have played the heroine of a favourite novel on the theatre of life.

The infidelity of husbands is less reprehended in England, than that of their wives; and the punishment inflicted on the latter, for a single transgression, is pursued with excessive severity; not by the law, but the public. A married woman who has been detected in an act of infidelity, sinks at once into everlasting contempt. No

repentance, no atonement, not even time, can remove the fatal stain ; her company is considered contagious. Such a criminal, therefore, must either retire to some distant part of the kingdom, or leave her native land for ever : and although the English have been charged with a disregard to their conjugal vows, it is certain such infidelities are less frequent, though perhaps more public when they happen, than on the continent ; and so rigid are the opinions in England, that Kotzebue's play of "The Stranger," though otherwise admired, is almost forbidden on account of its immoral tendency.

Jealousy is a weakness little known in England ; and that which marks the character of other nations, is severely satirised here. Wives in no country enjoy greater liberty ; and mutual happiness is preserved by a

mutual attention, free from ridiculous rhapsody, and a friendship originating in the heart. Indeed, I feel that I may without exaggeration assert, that an accomplished English family affords a more chaste picture of content and happiness, than any other objects in existence.

Envy, which appears to disunite men in other countries, is a vice rare in England: here the merit of the man is more regarded than his rank. Patents of nobility give no personal merit to the possessor; and a very leading character in the House of Commons is a brewer, who lives in habits of intimacy with men of rank, talents, and fortune. Yet travellers, who are only guided by appearances, might easily be led to believe, that the nobility of England were slaves to their rank. An ostentatious display of the coronet, not only glares on their

furniture, plate, and carriages, but even the buttons on their servants' livery wear this symbol of greatness. On the decease of a nobleman, all his houses display large escutcheons of his armorial bearings, in a deep black cloth frame in the front of the building. At the universities all the young nobility are distinguished from the commoners by a gold tassel depending from their caps. At the Rooms at Bath, a most tedious and scrupulous attention is paid to rank. All which marks of privilege, in some degree sanction the severity of French satire on the subject. But when we see the nobles mix freely with other classes of society; that high birth, unsupported by personal merit, is universally despised; that their domestic circles are patterns of all that is amiable; and finally, when we reflect, that those offensive exterior forms originated in

remote ages, and like other ancient customs, are rigidly observed, we shall feel disposed to reprobate this ill-founded prejudice.

Many of the English nobility have rendered eminent services to their country ; the flourishing state of agriculture, the inland trade, national industry, are chiefly attributable to their exertions ; and the names of the duke of Portland, marquis of Lausdown, marquis Cornwallis, and others, would do honour to any country, on the solid basis of individual and innate worth.

In the present age, the nobility have also derived an increase of consequence and splendour, by the elevation of characters whose merits are too well remembered to need a record here. The single name of NELSON is ample testimony of this truth.

Every noble family has a residence

at the west end of the town, but much of their time is passed on their estates in the country. I have before noticed, that their town-houses are simple in their exterior. Palaces, perhaps, might excite jealousy in the bosoms of citizens, and interrupt the harmony of mixed society. They therefore live like citizens in town, like princes in the country.

English females of high birth add to the most enchanting graces of an accomplished mind, a pure simplicity of manners, which exalts nobility. They are exemplary mothers, warm in the welfare of their country, unassuming in acts of boundless charity.

In their morning rambles, they condescendingly visit the humblest cottages for miles around their seats, fearlessly encountering the hideous aspect of misery, and benevolently solicitous to administer relief.

By this description I only mean to draw the interesting outlines of those amiable females who mingle with the noisy groupes of the metropolis in obedience to fashion, but indulge the milder feelings of their hearts in sweet retirement ; for there are ladies in London insensible to every beauty of nature, who cannot live out of a crowd, and are unable to fill up the vacancy in their minds without the aids of card-tables and public places.

Independent of the calm enjoyments of rural life, the nobility have other pursuits when they return to the country. Their libraries, their museums, are at the family-seat. Booksellers send thither all the literary productions of the last year ; which the tumultuous engagements of town have not permitted them to peruse earlier. Here then, they study, not only ruraleconomy, but politics ; they

study the situation of their country ; view its dangers, errors, and defects ; they explore the public opinion, form projects, commune with their friends on possibilities and probabilities ; and fortify their minds with ample subject to meet the ensuing Parliament, with honour to themselves and advantage to the state.

The London season is a continued round of dissipation, and passed, as in all great cities, in assemblies, concerts, balls, masquerades, operas, &c. The English pretend that these amusements are more splendid in London than in other countries. This observation may be true as to exterior pomp ; but all foreigners agree, that nothing can be more tedious than their internal regulations ; as no one is permitted to address another without a previous formal introduction.

One of the social pleasures of Lon-

don is a rout ; but to me it appears the most unsocial of all possible meetings, and exclusively peculiar to this metropolis. It would be very difficult in few words, to convey a suitable idea to the reader of this prevalent amusement. I shall, however, call it a colossal caricature of an assembly. It can only be given at a very large house, as the number of invitations is immense ; I have heard of two thousand five hundred cards being issued for one entertainment. When the apartments are not sufficiently capacious for the company, temporary rooms are erected in the yard, and most elegantly fitted up. The scene in the street serves as a prelude to that within doors ; a long range of carriages fills up every avenue, and sometimes a party cannot get up to the door for an hour or two. Having, however, accomplished this arduous task, on en-

tering the temple of pleasure, nothing is presented to the view but a vast crowd of elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen; many of whom are so overpowered by the heat, noise, and confusion, as to be in danger of fainting. Every one complains of the pressure of the company, yet all rejoice at being so divinely squeezed. The company moves from room to room; and the most an individual can do, on meeting a particular friend, is to shake hands as they are hurried past each other.

This confusion increases when the supper-rooms are thrown open. The tables, it is true, are laid out with Asiatic profusion: every hot-house for many miles yields up its forced treasures to grace this splendid banquet; but not one fifth part of the guests can be accommodated. Behind each chair, are ladies standing three

or four deep ; others are enclosed in the door-way, unable to advance or retreat ; and many are not even permitted to get a peep at the supper-tables, whose magnificence, perhaps, would only serve to tantalize them.

Such is the fatigue, the trouble, the sacrifice, that magnetizes the fashionable world on these occasions. And so extraordinary is the public anxiety to partake these scenes, that, in spite of the disgrace that would attend a discovery, many persons venture to them with forged tickets.

A stranger stands alone or unnoticed in all public places ; and if his exterior betrays him, he is even avoided. The English nobility are, in this respect, more national than any other order of society : not one of them keeps a table open to foreigners ; and those hospitable palaces, which at Paris, Vienna, Warsaw, &c. invite the

approach of foreigners, are unknown in England. Perhaps the increasing luxury of the times has banished hospitality.

Every Englishman has a hobby-horse; those of the wealthy, usually attach to luxury, and sometimes to more useful propensities, such as the arts, sciences, belles-lettres, &c. The luxury of splendid carriages is, however, constant, and surpasses all description. Indeed it would be difficult to convey an idea of the fashionable streets on a fine spring-day, crowded with rows of these magnificent luxuries. On the birth-days of the king and queen, they are still more singularly attractive, as it is usual for the nobility to sport new carriages on these occasions. The celebration of these national festivals displays a scene of inconceivable splendour.

The fashionable places of public resort, for the higher classes, are the Italian opera, Kensington - gardens, and Ranelagh.

The opera may be called the exclusive property of the affluent, who take the boxes by the year; but their number is unequal to the demand for them; the pit, therefore, has been added to the accommodation of the nobility: and in order to exclude improper company, the admission was raised to half-a-guinea. The dress is the same as in the boxes. The company, however, seem to assemble only to see and to be seen, as the nobility seldom arrive till between ten and eleven o'clock, when the piece is more than half over.

The promenade in Kensington-gardens, is one of the most interesting scenes to a stranger in London.

Hyde-park becomes the point of attraction that concentrates the fashionable world, from the moment spring dawns forth its awakened beauties. The ride is, on a Sunday, crowded with ladies and gentlemen on horseback; the promenade with rank and beauty, on foot; all elegantly attired, moving in one crowded scene towards Kensington-gardens. The high road through the park is also filled with dashing equipages, conveying parties to a certain spot, whence they cross the park into the gardens; no carriages being admitted into the ride excepting those of the royal family.

But how will a foreigner be astonished on entering this maze of singular attraction, where he finds the whole of these numerous parties buried in an almost perfect stillness! and this silent lounge preserves its invariable listlessness, unless any remarkable occurrence

awakens the fashionables from this *entertaining* reverie.

It happened the first Sunday on which I visited Kensington-gardens, that Madame Recamier, then lately arrived in England, was expected to grace the scene. Public expectation was on the tiptoe to behold this celebrated Parisian beauty, when two elegant cyprians, meaning to *quiz* the *beau monde*, presented themselves in all the fashionable nudity of French freedom, among the inquisitive croud.

As soon as they appeared, every one hurried to approach them, and a scene of fashionable helter-skelter ensued. Unfortunately, they were soon surprised by some gentlemen and betrayed: the imposition was buzzed from one party to another, and the tumult subsided, as quietly as it had commenced, and *supineness* was again the order of the day.

Ranelagh, so called from having been the banquetting-room to the palace of one of the earls of Ranelagh, is famed for the splendour of its decorations, and the superior elegance of the company who frequent it, all, by the fiat of fashion, full dressed.

The saloon, which is a rotunda, is surrounded by a double row of boxes, and comprehends a circle, whose diameter is 150 feet. The stranger is rapt in wonder on his entrance to this fairy scene. The splendour of the illumination gives to the imposing grandeur of the scene an effect not to be described; but this powerful delusion merely attracts the eyes: the sameness of moving round with the company palls on the senses, unconnected by any exertions in the company, who promenade as gravely round the room as if they were attending a funeral.

A fine pantheon, in Oxford-street, was once the gay resort of the fashionable world. It now, however, is deserted, except when occasionally used for exhibitions. Garnerin hired it to shew his wife and his balloon to the Londoners.

CHAP. V.

THE Love of Money prevalent in Trade; its ultimate Object—The Citizens—Their Formalities at Dinner—Artizans—Vauxhall—Bermondsey Spa-Gardens—Mobs of London and of Paris contrasted—John Bull, his real and mistaken Character—Newgate.

MANY individual traits in the English nation appear to confirm the opinion entertained of it abroad. A too great eagerness in making money, and a mean unworthy striving after gain, are the prevailing characteristic in trade. A man's merit is never here an object of enquiry. What is Mr. Such-a-one worth? is the first question proposed, and his pretensions to notice are solely dependant on his ways and means.

The arts and sciences, indeed all

the noblest ornaments of the human mind, are measured in England with a mercantile eye. A poor man is not allowed to possess any merit; and the thirst of money-making is carried so far, that *places under government* are *publicly* advertised for the best bidder.

This apparent meanness of conduct, however, is intended to lead to a very laudable purpose—to the acquirement of independency, which is the grand aim of every Englishman, who considers labour, in his youth, merely as a passport to the indulgencies of his old age.

No country in the world is so remarkable for the exertions of private individuals towards the promotion of commerce, and other national benefits, as the English. Instances of this kind are equally frequent and astonishing. For example:

Mr. Bourdon erected an iron bridge at the private expence of 60,000*l.* for the purpose of connecting certain divisions in Sunderland. The projection does infinite honour to himself, and the execution to the workmen he employed, it being considered the largest, as well as finest iron bridge in the world.

After the battle of Aboukir, Mr. Reid, in testimony of his national feelings, caused medals to be struck at his own cost, which he presented to the victors. To the captains, in gold, each of the value of 15 guineas; to the lieutenants, in silver; and to the several ship's companies, in metal.

No class, in England, stands higher in the public estimation than the merchants; whose patriotism and public spirit surpass all panegyric.

Among the peculiar class denominated *citizens*, many of the old Eng-

lish customs still have existence. At dinner they use no napkins, and observe certain formalities very troublesome to foreigners. Each lady must be solicited to drink wine by a gentleman, who first drinks to her, then to the mistress and master of the house; and so on till he has gone through the whole company. It would be indecorous to touch a glass with your lip previous to such challenge, and *running fire*, if I may so term it, of healths. When a stranger does not recollect the names of all around him, he is, consequently, exposed to great embarrassment. The habit of calling on the company to sing after supper is cheerful and pleasing.

The class of journeymen artisans appears, in England, to be more wealthy, as well as more polished, than that of other countries. Their exterior is more respectable; their minds more

cultivated; and their language and manners more correct.

Among the public amusements most frequented by the citizens may be ranked the theatres, Vauxhall; and the popular tea-gardens which surround the metropolis in every direction. Water parties to Gravesend and Greenwich are also among their favourite indulgencies.

Vauxhall is, to a stranger, the most imposing, as well as most delightful, of all the London spectacles. He enters with astonishment the brilliantly decorated arcades, which form a promenade in the illuminated gardens. A Gothic temple stands in the centre, appropriated to the music, which is both vocal and instrumental. A spacious rotunda joins on this light, elegant fabric, and leads through a suite of apartments. Elegantly convenient supper-boxes surround the whole, where

the guests repose without losing any part of the magnificent scene that surrounds them. Splendid fire-works, illusive transparencies, and martial music, intersperse among the trees, and ornament the seducing scene.

Bermondsey Spa-gardens are an humble imitation of Vauxhall, but as deficient in good company as in splendour.

The mobs of all countries are a many-headed monster, yet there is a material difference between the evil in London and in Paris. The former inhabits the city promiscuously, and in small parties; the latter forms a republic exclusively its own. Hence the sudden rise, and equally sudden dissolution, of riots in Paris: the electric revolutionary spark kindles the whole mass. Whereas, in a revolt of some consequence, that happened in London a few years ago, the association was

progressive; but the effect more permanent.

Wapping, St. George's-fields, the banks of the Thames in London, and St. Giles's, are the most favoured haunts of the English mob, called here **JOHN BULL**; and, although the partial eye of his countrymen reads in the rough barbarian a mere uncultivated nature, which, if polished, would display humanity, generosity, and every social virtue; yet strict justice will discover all those base qualities, which ignorance and idleness are calculated to mature in this their favourite idol. It is an insult to an Englishman, when a foreigner appears to doubt the characteristic patriotism and benovolence of honest John Bull.

That the industrious artisan is the friend of patriotism and the supporter of public spirit, I am free to confess; but, with the mob, it is far otherwise.

They are enemies to all order; outcasts of society; without a home; without a calling; assertors of all that is licentious, under the name of liberty; and fickle as they are profligate. And although this instability of character has often manifested itself publicly, still the well informed Englishman is incomprehensibly bigotted in favour of his countryman.

Read the daily papers and convince yourself, that nothing, in other countries, (Ireland excepted) can compare with the barbarities and brutalities familiar in England, particularly London; and these inherent propensities are no where more apparent than at Newgate on an execution day, which is quite a *jubilee* for the mob.

A foreigner must be a long time in London before he can sustain, with any degree of nerve, the national amusements of the mob.

If two ragged boys chance to quarrel at their marbles, a mob, *good-naturedly*, assembles round them in an instant, and a *friendly* Hercules immediately espouses the cause of either party, whom he inflames, not only to fight, but to sustain the conflict till he is covered with blood, and powerless from exertion. This is one of their greatest *enjoyments*. At the theatres and other public places, powerful vagabonds mingle with the croud purposely to create a confusion, which sometimes ends in several persons being crushed to death.

The alehouse, and the one-shilling gallery, are the only places of recreation allotted to the mob in England; whereas in Paris they have plays, balls, masquerades, &c. : but John Bull is always thirsty, and could not relish such dry amusements. According to Mr. Colquhoun, 20,000 souls pass every night in the streets for want of a home.

CHAP. VI.

WANT of literary public Spirit in England—Literary Patronage exclusively attached to Wealth and Power—The Supineness of the Legislature in behalf of Literature—The Hunters' Museums—English Literature denominated Public Characters—Authors—Book-making and Bookselling described—Lackington's Temple of the Muses—Literary Fame—Its Bias and Operation—The State of Literature at Oxford and Cambridge.

IN England, a German will not be able to discover many traces of that literary public spirit which unites the learned of his native country, keeps enthusiasm alive, and gives a cosmopolitan turn to the interest excited by the progressive improvement of the human mind. The republic of letters, in Germany, has not only attained a

high degree of independence and extent, but also maintains a powerful influence on the sentiments and spirit of the nation. Learned societies are, indeed, very numerous in England: the members, however, have hitherto displayed few instances of active co-operation; nay, they appear more solicitous to flatter the prevailing inclinations and whims of that many-headed monster, the public, than to establish a dignified consistency.

If any one thinks these remarks too severe, let him refer to the history of English literature; let him take a view of the literary institutions; let him ponder on the opinions of the critics; and let him peruse the latest literary performances in England.

However happily the realms of science have been extended in this country, and however it may boast of men gifted with the sublimest genius,

still the nation has never displayed that lively interest in the cause of literature, which it invariably displays in promoting trade, manufactures, and other national advantages. That the sciences, while most flourishing, were unable to produce an universal enthusiastic interest in England, may be proved by the history of that splendid epoch, now long passed, when the English, proud in possessing the greatest authors, looked from their summit of literary fame with contempt upon all other European nations.

The great and powerful usually possess comprehensive *rights of literary patronage*. In England, few authors succeed, unless they wear the livery of some illustrious patron. It is impossible, without pain, to peruse the biographies of the various great men to whom England owes her literary reputation; yet their *private* sufferings are

less surprising than the extreme coldness with which their comprehensive efforts were received by their cotemporary rivals; and to what cause can this indifference be ascribed? To no other, most probably, than to the *rights of literary patronage*, which the great exercise with as much authority in the regions of science, as in the spheres of luxury and fashion. Still I cannot comprehend, that in a nation eminently distinguished for a dignified spirit of independence, the votaries of the Muses should be the only persons who forget their dignity and liberty, and meanly beg their alms from the hands of accidental rank.

A striking instance of want of literary public spirit, in this country, may be found in the English legislators, who, for a century and a half, have thought the scientific improvement of their country an object unworthy

their notice, while commerce and national industry have been distinguished by the warmest support. Even the lectures given at Oxford and Cambridge, on some of the most important sciences, owe their existence to individuals; and while hundreds of millions have been squandered away on wars chiefly of a commercial nature, the most opulent people in the world wholly sacrifice those exalted ornaments, which refine the public taste, and dignify the national character.

It is scarcely to be believed, that the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland cannot boast one public library that is not, in some measure, incomplete in the most important departments of literature: no well stored collection of arts open to the public improvement; no national museum of natural history, established on a scale

proportioned to the various claims of science, and worthy the opulence of the kingdom. There are thirty very beautifully embellished libraries in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but not one among them so perfect as the most trifling of the public libraries at Gottingen, Dresden, and other cities of Germany.

The British Museum, as far as sound goes, offers to a stranger ideas of its superior magnitude and excellence. It is certain, that this national establishment contains a very large number of valuable historical manuscripts, which, in the departments of French and English history, are not, perhaps, to be surpassed by the Parisian library; but this is almost the only eminent and curious part of this much celebrated museum. The library and cabinet of natural curiosities are inconsiderable; and the Hamiltonian

collection of antiquities, although enriched with many interesting articles, does not deserve the reputation it has acquired. The museum is devoid of any settled scientific plan; it seems rather intended for a collection of curiosities, than for an establishment designed to gratify the scientific enquiries of the learned. Fifty years have now elapsed since the foundation of the establishment; during which period, numberless opportunities have offered to supply its deficiencies, and render it an institution adequate to the dignity of its name. It would have been extremely easy to annex the Leverian Museum, and to complete the national library by the purchase of valuable large libraries, frequently sold in London; but the English legislators are cold on this subject. William Hunter, brother to the celebrated John Hunter, expended the greater

part of his private fortune in the collection of coins, gems, cameos, and works of art, which I have been confidently informed by a friend who had an opportunity of seeing it, may rank with the most celebrated museums in point of fulness and beauty, and is unequalled in its shew of oriental coins. This exquisite *morceau* the owner patriotically desired to offer to the public, in memory of his attachment to the arts and sciences. With this intention, he petitioned parliament to grant him a piece of freehold land for the erection of a museum, which he meant, at his death, to leave to the public, enriched with his splendid collection. It is scarcely credible, that this modest request met with a refusal. The collector then, to prevent his treasure from being dispersed at his death, transferred it, upon very inadequate terms, to the university of Glasgow.

Parliament, it is well known, have long since granted 20,000*l.* to purchase Mr. John Hunter's natural, historical, and anatomical cabinet; but nothing has been hitherto done towards arranging it for the use of the public. John Hunter, whose scientific zeal will always preserve his name from oblivion, expended all the property he acquired by his own talents in the purchase, and applied his leisure hours in the formation of this very superior museum. At his death, that great anatomist had nothing to leave his family, except this vast collection, and his posthumous fame. His widow, who is a most sensible and amiable lady, therefore found herself necessitated to accept the situation of governante in a family of high distinction; and, but for the active intercession of the friends of the deceased, who recommended his museum as an

invaluable acquisition, it would have been sold by public auction.

If literary public spirit is seldom to be discovered in the English parliament, it is no less seldom observable in the studies of private individuals. Nor does even the meed of praise, with them, attach to the meritorious exertions of foreigners in illustrating the sciences; and that enthusiasm which an important discovery in the world of letters awakens on the continent, evaporates in crossing the sea. Thus Galvanism, with which the most important experiments have been made for these ten years past in Italy, France, and Germany, has scarcely yet begun to excite an interest in England.

The literati in England rank among the public characters: their public part is, however, extremely trifling, unless they enlist under the banners of party. Upon the whole, a man of letters has

only two modes of benefiting his contemporaries; the one as a public teacher, the other as an author: both, however, are extremely hazardous. The present state of the English universities offers no opportunities for a zealous and active votary of the sciences to distinguish himself.

The author will have to contend with literary patronage, with universally prevailing prejudices, and with the inconveniency of the bookselling trade. Toleration of opinion is undoubtedly great, but the illiberality and presumption of the English critics is disgraceful. The venal writer may, indeed, thrive on a luxuriant dung-hill, but genius struggles for every step it advances.

The circumscribed state of the book-selling trade contributes, in no small degree, to obstruct the efforts of genius and learning; and many interest-

ing works are born to die unseen. This assertion may appear singular to those acquainted with the partial opulence of booksellers, their expensive undertakings, their easy market, and their rapid sales.

Be it, therefore, known, that the principal part of the English bookselling trade is confined to a few individuals, whose superior wealth destroys all competitions; whose ignorance is their only mental qualification; whose insolence freezes the humble prospects of modest merit; and finally, whose principles, on most occasions, dictate terms, to which men of independent spirit never can submit.

Many books are still-born, advertisements being very expensive, and catalogues being seldom found at any booksellers, except those who deal in scarce books, and keepers of circulating libraries.

The English booksellers carry on book-making in the form and style of any other trade. A number of literary journeymen are constantly cutting and carving up books into folios and quartos, for which they are paid very moderate wages. The industry of these labourers is truly surprising; but their task-masters deserve chastisement, as they seldom have any other views, in their most expensive undertakings, than the extension of their own and the paper-maker's purses.

In fact, some booksellers in London are a nuisance in the world of letters, and a disgrace to England; their transgressions are so frequent and so shameful, that (could such a law be enacted) the *compilations* they are constantly in the habit of publishing, would be evidence against them, and the tribunal of taste and litera-

ture would award them the most severe judgment.

Lysons' *Environs of London*, in five quarto volumes, embellished with beautiful engravings, and printed on the finest vellum paper, is a work merely detailing epitaphs in the churchyards of villages near London. In like manner, the polygraphic Nicolls has contrived to swell his work into twenty volumes in folio and quarto. To Mr. Boswell's verbose biography of Dr. Johnson these long-winded productions are said to owe their origin; and it is to be lamented, that important documents in the hands of a coxcomical compiler, should dwindle into memoirs *like* those of Sir Robert and Sir Horatio Walpole, edited by the Rev. William Coxe.

London is the principal mart for all literary productions; the bookselling business in the country being very in-

significant. The booksellers in London are calculated to publish annually about 800 articles, the value of which, upon an average, amounts to half a million sterling. The time when parliament sits is most propitious to these gentlemen.

The publisher of a favourite performance finds even his expectations surpassed by the demand for it. In such a case, one edition rapidly succeeds another, and several thousand copies are disposed of in a very few days. The seducing charms of such success too frequently dazzle authors of eminent talents, and induce them to prefer, at the expence of truth and good taste, cultivating this rapid and transient celebrity, to lasting fame.

Some booksellers in London confine their trade to second-hand books, which is frequently much more profitable than publishing. It is almost incredi-

ble how rapidly the owner of such a concern may enrich himself, if he understands how to humour the whims of literary amateurs. . Mr. Lackington may serve as a remarkable instance; he began business when scarcely possessed of a guinea, and became, within a few years, worth 6000*l.* per annum. His house, the Temple of the Muses, as it is called, situated in the corner of Finsbury-square, contains a very large collection of books for sale, so advantageously displayed, that a stranger, on his entrance, is tempted to become a purchaser. Mr. Lackington, in his advertisements, asserts, that his collection consists of 800,000 volumes: this may go down with Englishmen, who have had no opportunity of seeing large libraries; but those who have seen the libraries at Paris, Gottingen, and Dresden, will scarcely suppose Mr. Lackington's

Temple of the Muses to contain more than 150,000 volumes.

On visiting the magnificent country seats of the opulent in England, a stranger will be surprised to find the most scarce editions of the classics. It should, however, be told, that expensive libraries are more frequently the toys of luxury in England than any where else; indeed they are sometimes used as paper-hangings to a large apartment. In such cases, the owner naturally does not pay so much regard to the intrinsic value of the work as to its exterior elegance; for the merits of the printer and book-binder, not those of the writer, are the only objects of his contemplation. Books, in octavo, are now almost excluded from splendid libraries, since folios and quartos present themselves to much greater advantage; which accordingly guides the speculations of

that worshipful body, the literary paper-hangers in London.

England, incontestibly, possesses some literary characters of the first éminence, who still pursue the superior objects of the sciences ; but when we consider the impediments they have to surmount, and the temptations with which they have to contend, it will not appear strange, that perverted instances of strength of mind and enthusiasm should be rare in the present age. No Englishman of a cultivated mind will deny, that his country is poor in great authors ; yet it would be unjust to conclude from this, that the country is equally destitute of eminent literary characters, for at no other period, perhaps, did England possess a greater number of solid scholars than at present. Their class is still highly respectable, although the present race of authors rapidly dege-

merates, and it would be very unfair to pass the same judgment on both. Many Englishmen, who have made great progress in the republic of letters, disdain the reputation of authorship, which, in England, is not the passport of great and splendid talents. Speaking of a celebrated literary character, you seldom hear the German question put, "What has he written?" "How have his works been received?" The English ask, "Who knows and who patronises him?" "With whom is he connected?" No Englishman will hesitate to yield a superior rank among the learned of his country to those exalted statesmen, Pitt, Fox, Grey, Landsdowne, Thurlow, and others, though they have never appeared as authors; for a small pamphlet, by Mr. Fox, cannot be thought a fair specimen of that great man's powers as an author. Dr.

Parr is generally considered one of the first philologists in England; yet he never appeared as an author in that department of the sciences, and many of the most celebrated physicians in London, for whose talents and knowledge their colleagues entertain the highest veneration, are unknown in the world of letters:—the same with many excellent mathematicians, who have merely made some small contributions to the commentaries of the London societies.

It is true, some of the professors of Cambridge and Oxford have distinguished themselves as authors; but the greater part of them by no means take a lively interest in the transactions of the literary world. The literary harvest in the English universities is amazingly scanty, if we con-

sider the immense number of gentlemen who live entirely at their leisure, after having completed their academical career. Independently of the professors, eight hundred and forty fellows are maintained in the various colleges of both universities. These academicians lead, indeed, a life much more comfortable and easy than many celebrated teachers in the German universities; they enjoy liberty, and are not chained to any public office; no other avocations engage their attention, but those resulting from their love of the sciences; they are in the prime of life, when the enthusiasm of the mind is most powerful, and enter on a literary career under the most auspicious circumstances. It cannot, certainly, be denied, that many of the fellows are men of the greatest erudition; and such characters as Mr.

M. of John's college, and Mr. W. of Clare-hall, Cambridge, would do honour to any society; but such honourable exceptions are very rare indeed.

CHAP. VII.

Want of Association among the Literati—The Chapter Coffee-house—The present State of Poetry—Dr. Johnson; his influence on contemporary Writers; his Criticisms analyzed—English Critics—Macpherson and Chatterton—The Author of the Pursuits of Literature—Peter Pindar—Novels—Madame d'Arblay—Philosophy—Natural History—Leverian Museum—English Physicians considered as Authors—State of foreign Literature in England—Translators of German Works—German Literature, generally.

THE learned, in England, seldom cultivate habits of intimacy, although London is not without literary societies. Formerly the *beaux esprits* of the age, assembled in small familiar clubs; of which Pope, Addison, Steele, &c. formed the members. The trace only of these agreeable circles is now dis-

cornible. Nor do I well know of any public place where a man of letters can pass his leisure hours with advantage. The booksellers are partially supplied with the new publications; and circulating libraries still worse. Newspapers and magazines are, indeed, taken in at coffee-houses; but with the exception of a few French, they are confined to English essays: thus the company at a coffee-house is so numerous that, at times, you must wait for hours before you can procure an interesting paper. The Chapter Coffee-house, Pater-noster-row, is most celebrated for its regular supply of publications.

I shall illustrate what I have advanced by a cursory view of English literature.

I think every Englishman of enlightened understanding will admit, that the rays of poetry, history and ethics, are under an eclipse; and we

may, perhaps, ascribe much of this revolution to the ascendancy of that ponderous rhetorician Dr. Johnson, who, with pedantic consequence, and important airs, presumed to decide in the controversies of criticism. These may be deemed harsh sentiments in England, where the *Johnsonianism* is a prevalent disease; but on reverting to proof, prejudice must be silent.

In a contest to prove the authenticity of Ossian's and Rowley's poems, he particularly exposed his weakness; and when a suspicion arose, as to their originality, the supposed fabricators were proceeded against with as much rigour as if they had forged bank notes. M'Pherson was attacked with such virulence, that his best friends dared not openly to espouse his cause: he is said to have pined under this contempt. The tragical end of poor Chatterton is well known; but per-

haps it is not equally notorious, that one of the English anonymous critics said upon that occasion, "*Chatterton has evaded justice by his own execution, as a forger of MSS. he deserved a gibbet.*"

But the venerable form of Ossian, in defiance of the cabals of scepticism, is still allowed to hover round the mangled corse of this poetic essay; since the strongest argument adduced by Johnson to support the opinion of its being an imposition was, that M'Pherson was unable to produce a finely-written MSS.; and it is to be feared, that all traces of its originality will soon be lost, unless some patriotic Scotchman secures the existing proofs. The ancient Erse vanishes rapidly from the Highlands; the beautiful poems of their venerable bards are substituted by English psalms;

and the greater part of them, perhaps, wholly lost.

Notwithstanding, Johnson has rendered eminent services to the cause of literature; but he was born a grammarian and rhetorician, and his 'Lives of the Poets,' decidedly prove how little he was qualified to become a critic. Without a soul capable of feeling the emotions which give birth to poetry, he presumed to explore its principles, and by the cold standard of grammar, to measure the enthusiastic flights of poetical fancy: yet this rough original has many imitators; but they are very far behind him; though, like him, they may fatigue the ear by copious and diffusive language, unaided by the persuasion of harmony, or the graces of elegance, yet the spirited antithesis of the master is lost in the laboured comparisons.

of the scholar, and his originality is caricatured.

England, at present, enumerates upwards of an hundred poets; but this abundance only tends to prove the cheapness of poetical fame; and the wretchedness of their puny efforts have provoked the scourge of satire. The author of "Pursuits of Literature," was peculiarly fortunate in his essay; ten editions were sold in less than two years: but on a review of the work it will be found, that the subject was the object of admiration, not the author.

Another satirist, of superior talents, is known in England, and in Germany to; and although he evidently detests the natives of the latter state, yet Germans, perhaps, do him more justice than his own countrymen.

PETER PINDAR is an unrivalled bard for fertility of fancy; light, yet poignant wit; an inexhaustible fund

of humour, and a composure not to be ruffled. He pourtrays the ridiculous, in richly blended light and shade, and with wonderful effect. Critics, however, attack him, and censure his manner, as they might a *Teniers* for not being a *Raphael*, or a *Butler*, because he was not a *Milton*. Even his greatest admirers will admit, that he sometimes couples the venerable with the ludicrous; and that he turns his splendid side from truth, as the comet does its beaming tail from the superior rays of the effulgent sun.

No style of reading is so prevalent as novel reading; and no style of writing more fashionable in England. More than thirty ladies are rivals in this species of composition. The grand object of these fair votaries of fame is to delineate nature with truth; and the highest applause is an assur-

ance that their work is a faithful picture of life.

The most deservedly celebrated among this class is Madame D'Arblay. Her best performance is *Evelina*; from whence the nation augured most propitiously of her descriptive talents; but these hopes were afterwards destroyed by the friendship of Dr. Johnson. The distinction of being the favourite of a man emblazoned by literary fame, was too powerful to be resisted; and to female vanity, on this head, her fame was sacrificed. This is one, among many instances, of the irremediable havoc made by Johnson in the region of belles lettres. This amiable woman, under his tuition, forsook that soft, easy, winning, yet correct style, which had procured her so many admirers, and adopted the stiffness and gravity of her *ponderous* Mentor. In her "*Cecilia*" the *Johnsonianism* is in

full blossom. In "Camilla," her last work, it is over ripe. Still, for the truth of her drawing, Madame D'Arblay's works may be called, "The History of the National Manners," a compliment scarcely to be paid elsewhere.

The present state of philosophy in England must be obvious, since no work, on that subject, has appeared during the last ten years, which bear competition, except the philosophical writings of Hume and Berkeley; and even these great authors would be unknown, if the former had not written a history, and the latter been distinguished for his erudition in divinity.

About fifteen years ago, it was asserted by George Foster, that, botany excepted, natural history was uncultivated, even by amateurs, in England; and it is certain, that no writer on the subject has since appeared who

can be compared with Cuvier, Lacepede, Geoffrey, Broussonet, and others, who compose the splendid æra abroad. Botany, it is true, is cultivated in England, as an amusement, particularly by the ladies. Short treatises on that science, are, therefore, successfully published, with explanatory engravings; but folio works do not succeed. Dr. Shaw formed a plan of publishing faithful engravings of the most rare and beautiful birds in the several museums; but found himself obliged to relinquish the expensive undertaking.

The Leverian Museum is a monument of what the enthusiastic pursuits of an amateur is capable of performing. As a private collection it is unrivalled; and had Sir Ashton confined himself to zoology, it would have been complete; but in its present

state, it is a medley of curiosities, devoid of system and arrangement.

Physicians, in England, are mostly amateurs in natural history; but the duties attendant on celebrity, are inimical to study. However, Pringle, Darwin, Brown, Fordyce, and others of high reputation, have written successfully; and at a time of life when experience assisted judgment, and gave correctness to their undertakings.

Foreign literature appears little known in England, if we except that of France. All large libraries contain French works of reputation; but as little time is given to study, they are less read than in Germany, where men of study are, in reality, booksellers.

Translations are very fashionable among the English; and are too often cruel distortions of the original de-

sign; and this is the only medium through which German literature is at all known in England. It has been asserted, but certainly without truth, that German literature was in high repute among the English. It is a fact, indeed, that Kotzebue's plays having been well received, herds of wretched translators introduced a heap of ridiculous German novels to the attention of the public; a few good works followed; but were so dreadfully mutilated, that the rage died away, and Mr. Litchtenberg need no longer exclaim, "that the English, by their translation of German works, will compel the Germans not to translate English works.

It may not be uninteresting to inform the reader, that the first happy impression made in favour of German productions, arose from Mr. Pitt; who,

in a very large company, passed a high eulogium on the "Robbers," by Schiller; a translation of which he had read with pleasure. This declared opinion gave celebrity to the work, and successive editions were rapidly called for. At that time, "The Sorrows of Werter," was the only popular German work known in England; and the success of the Robbers induced ignorant translators to attempt other plays from the same author. Don Carlos; Cabal and Love; The Minister; the latter by Monk Lewis, are beneath criticism.

Many English consider German literature immoral and dangerous; but they have formed their hasty opinion from some trifling German novels, which too easily find their way from circulating libraries to the toilet of beauty.

That German works are not read in the original language is evident, from the observation I made, that only three or four German booksellers are to be found in the vast metropolis, and those individually, or collectively, unworthy notice.

CHAP. VIII.

General State of the Arts in England—Painting—The English School—Sir Joshua Reynolds—Malone, his Biography—Annual Exhibition at the Royal Academy—Lawrence—Shee—Sir William Beechy—Opie—West—Westall—Fuseli—The Shakspeare Gallery—Bowyer's Historical Gallery—Caricatures—Print-sellers—Auctions for Paintings—European Museum—Sculpture—Westminster Abbey—Rysbrack—Roubillac—Bacon—Milton—Werber—Flaxman—Statues in the Squares—Architecture—The Banqueting-house at Whitehall—Sir Christopher Wren—The Monument—Somerset-house—Music—Italian Opera—Public Concerts—Private Concerts—Mechanics—Royal Institution.

WENKELMANN, Montesquieu, and Dubois, remarked long since, that the arts had not taken root in England, and ascribed this failure to the climate; others have attributed

it to the apathy of government : but the latter is a charge that cannot be advanced against his present Majesty, as he has taken a more lively interest to promote the arts than any of his predecessors. To him the nation is indebted for the attainment of a national gallery; and he has more particularly evinced his desire to encourage native artists, by decorating apartments in his palaces with the works of West, Gainsborough, and Wilson; and it is well known, that several branches of the royal family have devoted much of their study to the cultivation of the arts.

The constitution is, most certainly, one of the principal causes which depresses the arts. During the reign of Charles the Second, when the spirit of liberty was cooled, and political enthusiasm almost extinguished, the arts began to revive. There are other

self-evident reasons which have always contributed to depress the expansion of the arts, which every impartial observer will easily find out.

With moderns, painting is pre-eminent among the arts ; nor was it much less esteemed among the ancients. In England, neither amateurs, nor artists, are wanting ; but none of sufficient merit to justify a hope that fame will rescue their names from oblivion.

If we call to memory those days, when Rubens, Vandyke, and Holbein, were known in England, regret mingles with surprise, that such distinguished masters should have excited no spirit of emulation among an enlightened people, or have formed no pupils, except Sir Peter Lely, who has left many admired specimens of his proficiency in portrait painting. But these artists had so much employment as portrait painters, that the

luxuriancy of fancy was, as it were, fettered by their habits; and it is probable, that Rubens, who, as an exception to what I have stated, painted a ceiling at Whitehall, would, had he protracted his stay as Vandyke did, have lost all his powers of invention.

This confined scale of painting still prevails among the English. Genius remains depressed by ambition, and unattracted by reward. Public edifices are usually ornamented with portraits, and if perchance any public event calls for public record, the glorious task of national renown is not assigned to the *ablest*, but the *cheapest* artist. The painted hall, for instance, at Greenwich-hospital, was contracted for at so much per yard.

Many of my readers will, perhaps, hesitate with surprise, or enquire eagerly, whether Mr. Benjamin West has not painted many very able sub-

jects? Whether Mr. Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery, and Mr. Bowyer's Historical Gallery, are too insignificant for a foreigner's applause? To such I shall reply, that I have no ambition to be thought a connoisseur, but decide by my own personal feelings, on what I have seen of the English school of painting, trusting to their liberality, when I expose the grounds on which my judgment is founded, and hope for indulgence.

An *English School* may appear an unexpected term, but not without precedent. Mr. Dalaway*, a famous Johnsonian, assures us, with his peculiar solemnity, that Sir Joshua Reynolds must be considered as the founder of the English school; but adds, with ridiculous *naïveté*, "I certainly am unacquainted with the dis-

* Dalaway's Anecdotes of the Arts in England. London, 1800, 8vo. page 521.

tinguishing features of such school*." Still, however, many will argue, "Do we not possess large and valuable galleries? Have we not artists of reputation? Have we not an Academy of Arts? With these pretensions, therefore, why not claim one English school, when the Italians, under similar circumstances, boast so many?"

The founder of a new school of painting ought to possess various requisites. He should be distinguished for originality of conception, and correctness of design. He should possess a capacious mind, at once fertile and luxuriant; he should be an excellent theorist and an able artist. But who was Sir Joshua Reynolds? A gentleman, whose amiable character commanded the respect and affection of all who knew him; an excellent portrait painter; but with a genius so

* Dalaways, page 523.

confined, that he never attempted more than single historical figures, and those rarely. Among these, Venus and Ugolino in prison is the most esteemed. Sir Joshua, when president of the Royal Academy, explained his theory in several speeches made from the chair. On the publication of the first, containing the ground-work of his art, the great Mengs was known to exclaim, "That Englishman diffuses nothing but errors among his countrymen." Connoisseurs of eminence have since confirmed this opinion. The Italians and Germans view with surprise the partiality Sir Joshua has discovered in his estimation of the most celebrated artists; but that surprise should cease when they reflect on the confined sphere to which his observations were directed. Independent of this, Sir Joshua is cold in his hypothesis, and languid in his deductions;

he reasoned on his own visions by the tame rule of logic, instead of the brilliant effusions of fancy; but he piqued himself on being the pupil of Johnson, whence this frigidity arose.

We are told by his biographers, that Sir Joshua, when a youth, at Rome, neglected all the advantages of his situation, and took particular delight in sketching caricatures. Mr. Malone, in describing the merits of his friend, assures the world, that Sir Joshua expended a considerable part of his fortune in the purchase of fine paintings, and thought no sum too large for a good Titian. These he sacrificed to his ambition, by scraping off their colours with the noble view of discovering the secret of producing their peculiar richness and effect*. In adverting to

* Vide Sir Joshua Reynolds's Works, vol. I. page xxx of the Introduction. Here Mr. Malone finds an opportu-

facts related by his own biographers, I cannot be supposed to be improperly actuated, nor do I wish to take any merit from Sir Joshua, who, I really believe, stood foremost among the competitors of his own rank; but I think it fair to analyze the pretensions of a man who is stated, by his exalted genius, to have formed a new era in the art of painting; and although the English school followed close upon Sir Joshua's death, he was known to have declared publicly, "that

nity to express himself with wonderful *naïveté*:—"Had Sir Joshua lived two years longer he might have gratified his wishes at a much cheaper rate, as Miss Aun Jemima Previs is in possession of the genuine receipt used by the ablest Venetian masters. It was brought from Italy by her grandfather, Captain Morley, and having been communicated by this young lady, for a very inconsiderable sum, to some eminent artists, the proof has exceeded expectation; we may, therefore, hope, at the next exhibition, to see some pictures with this colouring."

May Mr. Malone meet a suitable reward for this important discovery; and may he next stumble on an *unadulterated* receipt to edit the works of Shakspeare!!

the period was far distant when England might claim that privilege."

The English school of painting (if it *must* be so called) is not without its peculiar features. Its members are almost exclusively portrait, or landscape painters; imitators all of favourite masters, although they aim at popularity both as to invention and composition. These remarks will be obvious to any stranger who visits the exhibition which opens the beginning of May, and closes in the following month. The admission is one shilling, and so numerous are the visitors, that about 3500*l.* is collected annually; which sum is mostly appropriated to the relief of the decayed families of deceased artists during the preceding year.

The paintings and drawings in 1802 amounted to 893, executed by 354 artists, chiefly resident in London, and

amateurs. Of those, 437 were portraits, and two-thirds of the remaining 456, landscapes and domestic scenes; the rest are historical, mostly, however, very small and insignificant; and those of a larger size only contained two, and rarely three, figures. On an enlarged scale, there were none.

Among the portraits it would be extreme injustice not to select the works of Lawrence and Shee, some of which were exquisite: Vandyke appears to have been their model; and it must be confessed, they excel in imitating the soft carnation of that master. There were also some good portraits by Sir William Beechey and Opie: the former, however, colours too highly, the latter too faintly; but both have their merits, particularly on points left to the fancy of the artist. Their attitudes are spirited; their features animated and comprehensive. Even

the most vacant countenances will possess a certain character under peculiar situations, descriptive of every emotion of the soul; and this, when seized, as it were, by poetical divination, does honour to the artist. The four gentlemen I have mentioned are exclusively entitled to this compliment in England.

Mr. Opie is also an historical painter, and, in my judgment, the first in the English school. I do not pretend his works are without imperfection; but they glow with merits that cast all competition among his countrymen at a distance. His outlines are remarkable for correctness; his figures are bold, and his composition simple, but arrayed with truth. In the exhibition of 1802, he presented a *chef d'œuvre*, representing a father, mother, and daughter; large as life, and grouped most admirably.

I have seen many of Mr. Benjamin West's pictures, but am at a loss to determine whether the colouring, or composition, most displeased me; the one abounds with the errors of the English school, the latter displays nothing but confusion. In the altar-piece at Greenwich, although acquainted with the subject, you have difficulty to select the principal group from the mass of figures crowded around them, in defiance of all rule or order; and the colouring is so harsh, so inanimate, so unnatural, as to be devoid of effect: yet excellent engravings have been made from his works, especially from those which flattered the patriotism of the English, in which the errors of the original have been, in many instances, avoided.

Mr. Westall, another academician, may be offered as a contrast to Mr. West; his efforts are to fascinate the

view, and the objects he chuses are light female figures, or children. The latter is wholly devoid of gallantry in his subjects. Men in armour please his sturdy taste; he has nothing to do with women and children. The graces of his pencil have procured Mr. Westall much popularity in England; and engravings from many of his lovely groupes are familiar at all the fairs in Germany; but I doubt very much if Apollo were to wait upon this artist, with a view of directing his taste to truth and nature, he would renounce the chequered variety of his style, lest his popularity should suffer by the change. And this enviable distinction is the grand object of every artist, who tortures invention to attract visionary honour.

Mr. Fuseli, a professor of painting, has had recourse to the marvellous; but his fancy is not of a soaring na-

ture ; he has contented himself with descending to the lower regions, and displays his *friends* in a gallery of devils, witches, and other deformed beings, which create a momentary horror, and conclude with provoking laughter.

Some of Mr. Fuseli's paintings may also be seen at the Shakspeare Gallery, in Pall Mall. This gallery is very superior to the Historic Gallery of Mr. Bowyer ; but a friend to the arts will not be gratified in visiting either. Engravings have been taken of the different subjects with a softened and improved effect. These galleries were established with a degree of eagerness and hurry evident in all the paintings.

I must not, however, neglect two large landscapes, by Louthembourg, in Mr. Bowyer's Gallery ; the one represents the awful fire of London, and the other the destruction of the Spa-

nish armada. They appear in a distant perspective, and are extremely grand in their effect. Taste and simplicity are the features of these pieces, and the *contour* is harmony. Many individual beauties are also perceptible, particularly the hostile elements of fire and water: perhaps the tempestuous clouds in the one, and the smoke of the other, are too sombre; yet, upon the whole, they are certainly deserving admiration; and the scenes, though bustling, are represented with perspicuity, and announce the bold and expressive touches of a master:

No nation ever equalled England in caricatures. The arts, it is true, are not improved by this taste, but the country is benefitted.

London printshops are elegantly fitted up, and contain all the best engravings published; but you rarely meet with any paintings for sale.

The latter, either in collections, or otherwise, are exposed to auction; and two, at least, take place weekly during the winter season. I was astonished at the great number of Italian, Flemish, French, and German paintings, constantly advertised for sale; and could not stifle a sigh, when I reflected, that the continent was deprived of so many treasures, to be buried in another country.

Frauds, which had been successfully practised by the Italians, or travelling Englishmen, raised a notion, that England was a good market for works of mediocrity; but speculators have severely proved the contrary. The high duties on foreign paintings, the extravagant charges of auctioneers, and other incidental expences from a residence in London, form a hazard almost amounting to prohibition.

At the European Museum, in

Charles'-street, St. James's-square, a gallery established by picture-dealers, I found some very fine pieces by Spanish masters, and others by French masters, which the revolution, most probably, had smuggled here; but I also found many vile performances, marked with names of eminence; *Corrigeos*, that would disgrace a sign-post; and vile copies of the best masters, unblushingly averred to be originals, though such originals notoriously ornament public galleries abroad.

As the possession of fine paintings is among the *desiderata* of an Englishman of fashion, we must calculate, that among Fortune's fools, purchasers are found who desire to form a gallery, and pique themselves more on the *expense* of the collection, of which they *can* judge, than of the intrinsic value, of which they *cannot*.

I do not deny, that there are connoisseurs in England, but they are guided more by rule than feeling; they are content with knowing where Titian errs; what Corregio wanted to be perfect; where Raphael is least to be admired.

It is the same with artists; they raise their price for portraits in proportion as it becomes fashionable to fill apartments with your ancestry; and court riches, while they neglect ambition.

Sculpture is another art, admired, but not patronised. England at present boasts a very valuable artist in the younger Flaxman, whose chisel is very superior to that of Bacon, Banks, or any other cotemporary of his own nation.

Westminster Abbey is the repository of the most celebrated productions in this art, ancient and modern; but

unfortunately the indiscriminate mixture which prevails here destroys the grandeur of the scene.

The most distinguished modern efforts in sculpture found here, are by Rysbrack, Roubillac, Bacon, Wilton, Werber, and Flaxman. Rysbrack is, I believe, from the Netherlands; Roubillac, from France. Many of their works are to be seen in the Abbey; and they seem to have been guided by a similar spirit, with a false taste. Their favourite aim was expression; but in attempting to give boldness to expression, they frequently caricature nature: the mechanical part, however, is not without merit.

A monument in honour of General Wade, is esteemed the *chef d'œuvre* of Rysbrack. In the centre are trophies to commemorate the victory; on the left, Time advances with intent to destroy the monument; and on the

right, Fame eagerly rushes forward to avert the prophane attack. The latter figure is finely expressive; but Time conveys more the idea of tediousness, than the allegory it is intended to represent.

Handel's monument, and the tomb of Mrs. Nightingale, are the best of Roubillac's works. The celebrated musician is represented as listening to the last trump on the day of resurrection. The head is a correct drawing from nature, and the countenance is full of animation; but that is all. The position would better suit an opera dancer in a *pas seul*; and it is ridiculous in the extreme, to see a musician solely occupied in listening, whether the angel sounds the trumpet properly, at a moment so solemn as the last day. The burlesque is equally censurable in the monument of Mrs. Nightingale. The base represents a vault, with an half-opened

door, from which death is just peeping out his terrific skull. Above the vault, the lady, who died in the prime of youth, reclines a corpse in the arms of her disconsolate husband, who, with looks of infinite anguish, extends his arm to avert the approach of the grim tyrant. The lady being dead, the solicitude of her husband's attitude is quite an hyperbole.

Bacon's great work is the monument of the immortal Chatham, which is of considerable magnitude, but wholly devoid of poetical arrangement. The principal figure is altogether unconnected with the allegorical figures of Britannia and Old Thames; both of whom are seen weeping. Indeed, all Bacon's works are without taste, but excellent as to execution.

General Wolfe's monument, by Wilton, has the same errors. The general is represented as dying in the arms of

Victory, who supports the almost exhausted hero by the left arm, in a manner truly awkward. The piece is scarcely above mediocrity.

The Poet's Corner, celebrated for the illustrious characters it presents to posterity, is by no means elegant, but highly interesting. Shakspeare's monument is very plain. He reclines upon an antique altar, ornamented with the heads of Henry the Fifth, Richard the Third, and Queen Elizabeth, in *basso relievo*.

Close to the immortal bard sleep the errors of his frigid commentator, Dr. Samuel Johnson; and opposite to him, the immortal Garrick, who gave soul to every thought of Shakspeare. This great actor is represented in a theatrical position, speaking a soliloquy from his favourite bard. At his feet the Dramatic Muses sit weeping; above his head is suspended the me-

dallion of Shakspeare. Thalia and Melpomene are considerably smaller than the principal figure, and offend the judgment. The theatrical expression is happily executed, and not badly conceived; it being much easier to represent character with effect, than the natural ease of unstudied attitude. This monument is by Werber, in *alto rilievo*.

The monument of Lady Catharine, the lady of Sir Robert Walpole, is an excellent copy of an ancient statue executed by Pudicitia, in the Villa Mattei. The present was the work of Valory, and was brought from Rome by Sir Robert. The figure is full dressed. The art, perhaps, cannot exhibit any thing more perfect.

Lord Mansfield's monument, by Flaxman, is a most masterly work. His lordship is described in his robes, seated on the bench: his left hand

grasps a roll of paper, his right rests upon his knee; on a low step, to his right, stands Justice, with her scales; to the left, Themis, with an opened book in both hands; behind the chair is Somnus, dosing, and dropping an extinguished torch. The monument is disadvantageously situated; the side figures are overshadowed; but the effect of the whole is truly grand and imposing. As to its individual merits, I should be called an enthusiast were I to enumerate them; and it might be decreed a faultless proof of human skill, if his lordship's wig was not so extravagantly large.

I cannot pass this subject without censuring the scandalous custom of exacting money from all persons who wish to see the Abbey, and, indeed, all places of public curiosity in England; but so much has already been said on

this abuse of office, that my strictures would little avail me.

The statues which occupy stations in the centre of squares, and other public places, are scarcely worthy of notice. That of Charles the First, at Charing-cross, by the great master Hubert le Sœur, and that of James the Second, at Whitehall, by Grinling Gibbons, are the only exceptions: indeed, the others are all below mediocrity; and that of Queen Anne at St. Paul's, and his present Majesty, in Berkeley-square, are below criticism.

The Banqueting-house at Whitehall, is one of the most remarkable buildings in London. It has a magnificent chapel; the ceiling of which employed all the talents of Rubens, in giving celebrity to a very trifling subject, the apotheosis of James I. The building is one of the finest specimens of architecture in the metropolis, and highly creditable

to the taste of Inigo Jones, the predecessor of the great Sir Christopher Wren; who, with 'Shakspeare and Newton, are the greatest modern ornaments in their respective pursuits of science and arts.

Sir Christopher Wren combined all that was wonderful in his genius. Without having even seen Italy, he conceived, and ventured to carry into execution, the most stupendous plans; the chief ornaments of the city, St. Paul's, St. Stephen's, Walbrook, and the Monument, are proud records of his unrivalled talents. Yet his tasteless cotemporaries have done all in their power to conceal these admirable works—an instance of ingratitude that must have proved truly painful to this great man in his old age!

But the art appears to have revenged this insult, as no architecture of celebrity has been known in England since

those days. Somerset-house, by Sir William Chambers, is indeed an extensive undertaking; but who could not pile heaps of stones upon each other as injudiciously as he has done?

To judge from appearances, music seems to take the lead of all the fine arts in England; the country abounds in amateurs, among the lower class especially. An itinerant musician, or a ballad singer, immediately attracts a crowd. Good-natured Englishmen affect to discern in the power the worst music has over the worst class of society, an undeniable proof of the unadulterated feelings of the mobility: they should, however, reflect that savages own the power of music, and that the islanders in the South Sea were enraptured with the bag-pipe of Captain Cook, and the Hottentots with the drum of Le Vaillant.

In the higher classes, the number of

amateurs being very considerable, it is rather surprising the art has attained so little proficiency. I speak the language of well informed Englishmen, when I state that music is still in its infancy—a spoiled child, and of a constitution too weak to thrive. London can never be in want of able musicians; for vocal as well as instrumental talents are so profusely rewarded, that the golden temptation attracts them from all quarters of the globe. Here they soon realize a little fortune, and retire; variety being the soul of fashion.

The Italian opera is a glaring instance of the power of fashion. It is supported at an enormous expence by the great world, and all the talent of the kingdom unites in the orchestra, and on the stage, to give celebrity to the scene. Still this expensive luxury is treated as a *bagatelle*, to which

haut ton never repairs until the entertainment is two-thirds over; and then a continued flippancy of chit-chat in the boxes, excludes all attention to the performers. At public concerts it is the same.

The mechanics are as warmly protected, as the fine arts are neglected, by the English. Hence their superiority in all works of national industry; patents ensuring an exclusive privilege to the inventor of every new curious production for fourteen years, is a grand stimulus to excite genius to labour, and the immense market which the commercial world here has with the world at large, greatly contributes to its encouragement. But causes still more powerful operate in their favour; among which, one may particularly class the universal *technical* knowledge that pervades all ranks of society.

The manner of exhibitions also,

greatly contributes to the general consumption of its manufactures: nothing can exceed the tempting display of English shops of all descriptions; and it is singular to observe with what *professional* judgment, if I may use the term, ladies of the first distinction canvass the merits of any new discovery in the manufactures of the kingdom.

New inventions are received with public approbation. The inventor is made known, and ranked among the class of useful citizens. If he is enterprising, his fame increases, and he becomes a public character; and his political influence increases, till he at length becomes a leading member in the constitution, and his voice gives interest and consequence at the county election.

Emulation is the certain consequence of this all-fostering distinction; and

the English manufacturer would do well to make himself acquainted with the history of all modern inventions; their qualities, excellencies, and disadvantages; let them originate in whatever part of the globe they may.

There are two excellent institutions in England, "The Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce;" and "The Royal Academy." The founder of the former is the famous Count Rumford; and the object of this institution is promptly to give publicity to all new inventions, as well as to direct the general observation to objects of interest and importance.

CHAP. IX.

The English Theatre—The worldly Stage of London—Ancient and Modern Times—Edifying and ludicrous Dramatists—Theatrical theoretical Knowledge in England—Singular Stagnation of the Art—The present Management of the English Theatres—Monopoly—Sheridan, the Manager of Drury-lane—The public Lovers of the Drama at Paris and in London—London Theatres—Actors—Laws of Theatrical Deportment—Violation of Decorum—Mrs. Jordan as Miss Lucy—Costume—Misconceived Rules of Theatrical Deportment—Difficulties which an Actor has to surmount—Declamation of the English Tragic and Comic Actors—The Cause why the English do not possess any highly-finished Comedies—Remarks on the Declamation of Cooke and Kemble—Picturesque Part of the English Art of Acting—Dumb Play—Cooke and Kemble compared—Wewitzer and Palmer—English Actresses—Cooke in Richard the Third—Pernicious Influence of the Public on the English Actors—German and French Theatres—General Remarks on Kemble and Cooke—Liberties which the Public take with the Actors, and *vice versa*—The Debut of, a

Young Lady at Drury-lane--Indifference--Inconstancy and Patience of the Public--The Theatres of Drury-lane and Covent-garden--Their Decorations--*Monstrosities* of the English Pantomimes--English Operas--Mrs. Billington--The Italian Opera, its Ballets compared to those at Paris--Mademoiselle Parisot--Madame Hilligsberg--Madame Laborie--D'Egville, Laborie, St. Pierre--Royal Circus--Astley's Amphitheatre--Sadler's Wells--The Little Theatre in the Hay-market--Private Theatres at London.

THE existing affinity between the art of acting and the fine arts, lead to a supposition, that they have experienced a similar fate among the English. But the history of the English stage shews, that the art of acting is separable from the fine arts, and dependant on dramatic poetry. While dramatic writing flourished, acting flourished; but the former being reduced to a very low ebb, the latter has declined with equal rapidity.

England was certainly distinguished for great dramatists long before she could boast of great actors. As the na-

tional enthusiasm increased for that sort of writing, demands were made for suitable performers, and uncultivated nature found herself obliged to seek improvement from art, which never denies its aid to sincere votaries. Thus three advantages resulted to the English stage; the talents of great performers were called into action; the nation established a standard of dramatic and theatrical excellence, which defied the fashionable caprice of the moment; and the actor became subordinate to the author, whom he was forced to follow faithfully step by step.

As an actor receives the matter which he is to embody from the hands of the author, he is, in some degree, more limited than any other artist; and his fancy can only operate in conjunction with that of the poet. While, therefore, a great dramatist exalts an actor

of distinguished talent, an insignificant poet must unavoidably debase him: all the exertions of an actor must be vain, if he is not supported by the genius of the poet. The art of acting in England has had the good fortune to be directed, for a considerable time, by great poets; for, although many of the dramatic works, composed in the golden age of English poetry, cannot stand the ordeal of rigid criticism, it must be allowed, that the greater part discovers beautiful traces of a free poetical spirit, and abounds with brilliant strokes of wit and genius. The English actors never had to contend with those abominable *monstrosities* which unskilled German dramatists have produced on the stage. The English art of acting has, therefore, been enabled to assert its rank among the fine arts with greater facility than the German.

The great dramatists of England having obtained classical reputation among the people, contribute highly to the perfection of the stage; for although much of their poetry and language is old-fashioned, they, nevertheless, continue to retain their pristine splendour in the eyes of the nation. For the idea, that whatever is beautiful is imperishable, and cannot lose aught of its intrinsic value by a contrast with the mutable forms of time, is closely interwoven with the elevated conception which the English entertain of the superior excellence of their great dramatic poets. The history of the English theatre does not, therefore, record any of those rapid changes which frequently result from the tyrannical influence of fashion. A steady progress on the accustomed path is perceptible, and has protected the English stage, for a considerable

time, against the encroachments of inferior poets. The genius of immortal dramatic writers serves as an *Ægis*, by which the English are capable of defending poetical greatness, and repelling the daring attempts of poetasters. Thus Shakspeare, Otway, and other venerable geniuses, have long been guardians of the national stage.

Impressed with these sentiments of veneration for their sublimest dramatic poets, the English have conceived an enthusiastic attachment of the purest kind for those bards; and would rather pardon any fault in an actor than a want of poetical feeling. They therefore require, that an actor should display an unbounded zeal for the art: hence actors devote themselves to a particular line, either of tragedy or comedy, in pursuit of celebrity, which cannot be general—the actor penetrates deeply into the part, and ex-



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erts all his powers to sustain it with feeling.

These favourable relations accomplished the art of acting in England, supported by the character and the public life of the nation, as well as the observation of human nature, on which the art of an actor must be founded. For in what European country does the character of an individual display so perfectly free a vital energy? where does humanity blossom with such variegated colours? where is the web of the public and private life of an individual so admirably interwoven? and where do all its component threads lay so open to the eye of the observer? What country possesses such an amazing and increasing national spectacle as London presents? On this enormous stage, all scenes change in the most comprehensive variety, which represents the great and small, the beauti-

ful and ugly forms of human life, antiquated greatness and patriarchal simplicity of manners, together with modern meanness and profligate refinement; elevated sentiments and dignity of manners, contrasted with familiar baseness and noxious roughness of manners; a most extensive gallery of original characters, marked with an infinity of shadows, and illustrated by the most extraordinary lineaments in life; a variegated assemblage of human passions, which appear in the most singular groupes, and act without restraint. All these multifarious scenes change incessantly on the great, unique, and astonishing worldly stage of London, and cannot escape the eye of the passenger, as they are illumined by the broad light of day. What a scene for an artist who aims to learn the real touches of nature! Here the great English dramatic poets

drew from life; and these dramatic sketches a stranger will find to correspond with the present state of England in an exactness that astonishes. The energetic characters drawn by the masterly pen of Shakspeare, are not yet extinct among the English; and a stranger will frequently find himself transported into the world of the poet, where the current of life rushes on with inconceivable velocity and fathomless depth.

If, considering the great advantages which have favoured the formation of the English theatre, the question should be put, "Whether their combined efforts have raised the art of acting in England to that degree of perfection which might have been expected, it would be unjust, from its present decline, to sketch the picture of its former greatness?" No Englishman of education will, I presume, deny, that

the English stage has lost much of its former splendour; and that its eventual decay approaches rapidly. But, at the same time, let it be observed, that formerly a different spirit animated the art of acting in England. The public, as well as the actors, displayed a superior degree of enthusiasm, and the dramatic critics were much more severe, restricting to their own walks, poets of mediocrity, and actors without talent.

This period, so auspicious to the art of acting, commenced before the days of Garrick, in whose life-time the fairest epoch of the English stage seems to have flourished. It may, therefore, be presumed, that the art of acting was in full bloom in the days of Garrick, at whose death the blight of false taste deprived it of its luxuriance. England may indeed boast a Mrs. Siddons, an actress far supe-

rior to all the female ornaments of the German and French theatres ; she may be considered as one of the most extraordinary beings that ever exalted the art. She realised an idea which even extends the limits of criticism, while it raises the standard of excellence by surprising greatness. Next to Mrs. Siddons, the drama is indebted to the powerful exertions of Mrs. Litchfield. England also possesses, in Kemble and Cooke, two actors of the first eminence. But these few exceptions merely serve to render the rapid decline of the whole still more striking.

Various, but evident, are the causes which have effected this melancholy revolution in the English stage. The false notions which Johnson and others disseminated respecting dramatic poetry, and the purport of an English theatre, have, no doubt, contributed

greatly to depreciate the value of the great dramatic poets in the opinion of the nation, and thereby facilitated the introduction of inferior works to the stage. The decision of Johnson was, that the theatre should be a school of morals. The present English critics, however, appropriate the poetical merit of a dramatist in proportion as he exhibits elementary morals, set off with an abundance of edifying sentences. The *West Indian* of Cumberland is unanimously commended by the English as a pattern in this respect. I was once in Drury-lane at its representation to a full house, and heard, with considerable astonishment, thundering applause bestowed on the most trivial passages.

Independent of those poets, whose principal views centre in moral edification, there exist at present another class of dramatists in England, who

disarm the rage of the critics by entering the lists with Joe Miller. Wit never was more shamelessly prostituted or more cruelly maltreated than by these unlucky *bon-mot* hunters. Indeed it appears most extraordinary how these buffooneries are permitted to disgrace a stage, where the majesty of Shakspeare commands veneration; but they are licensed by the English, as fully appears by the applause given to the wretched productions of O'Keefe, Morton, and others of *equal fame*.

In proportion as the English stage thus imperceptibly loses its form in eminent advantages, the taste for Shakspeare declines. Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Litchfield, Kemble, and Cooke, are the only performers, who, from time to time, rekindle the expiring flame; and, with the exception of a few general rules, which regulate the theatrical deportment of the present

day, theory seems wholly unattended to. Even the elementary parts of all acting, for instance, dumb-play and declamation, have never been scientifically treated in England; for the feeble essay of Mr. Sheridan's father, *ON DECLAMATION*, is beneath distinction. The theatrical criticisms of the English, and their judgment of celebrated actors, are triflingly empty; and frequently so erroneous, that no doubt can exist of their ignorance in the art of acting. Nor is there, as far as I have been able to learn, any school for young actors in England; they do not seem to have an idea of the advantages of such an institution as the "*Théâtre des Jeunes Elèves*" at Paris. But the partial and erroneous opinions which at present prevail in England on the art of acting, must be removed ere it can be amended; of this improvement the present

national taste does not afford any hopes.

It may be supposed, that the talents of English actors unfold themselves from their first appearance on a London stage: experience, however, proves the contrary. Well educated Englishmen generally complain, that the expectations formed of promising actors are too often disappointed, whenever they have appeared on the London boards.

The negligent management of the theatres in a great measure obstructs the progress of the art of acting in England, which is merely considered a financial speculation. The managers seem heedless whether the actors undertake suitable parts, and altogether dispense with the rules observed by Garrick, in whose days young men of genius were brought forward; instructed, and guided under his personal

auspices. He gave lectures at his own house on dramatic criticisms, and communicated his enthusiasm to his young pupils.

It may be asked, whether self-interest ought not to induce the London managers to shew greater activity in improving the English stage? But the exclusive patents which both houses possess, unfortunately operate to cramp the British drama; since the managers may always calculate on filling their houses in a city like London, containing upwards of a million of inhabitants; many of whom resort to the theatre merely to kill time. The inactivity of the managers also proceeds from the actors being sheltered against the severity of criticism; for the newspapers always teem with eulogies on their performances, however ill deserved. Whether these panegyrics, which frequently fill columns in the papers,

are paid for by the managers, or whether the proprietors of the newspapers hold shares in the theatres, I do not presume to decide.

The celebrated Mr. Sheridan seemed fully qualified to effect a salutary reform on the English stage. He possessed a considerable share in Drury-lane, the chief management of which was entrusted to him. His taste, patriotic ardour, and extensive influence, entitled the English public to form the highest expectations from him. As a dramatist he has departed from the beaten path, and sought in the "School for Scandal" to oppose a pattern of refined taste to that of broad humour. In "the Critic," he attacked the trespasses of unqualified dramatic critics and ridiculous panegyrits, with irresistible keenness of wit and satire. These steps seemed to mark the patriotic reformer, whose

progress would have been greatly facilitated by his connections in the fashionable world, and supported by the ardent friends of the drama. Mr. Sheridan, however, did not think proper to avail himself of the favourable opportunity, and it is certain, his name does not stand very high in the annals of theatrical management.

The decline of Drury-lane was indeed so rapid during his management, that even his political adherents were loud in their displeasure. Some of the best actors left Drury-lane; and Mr. Sheridan found himself obliged to resort to measures highly prejudicial to the national taste, in order to increase the receipts and obtain credit for a full house. The public were, as often as possible, attracted by new plays, which afforded the most wretched writers admission to the stage.

The drama was superseded by the pageantry of pantomime, to the annoyance of every chaste lover of the stage. This trick produced incalculable mischief; instead of combating a vicious taste by reviving the masterly works of England's greatest poets, it inundated the stage with buffooneries.

The consequence of this was, that the connoisseurs in the theatrical art almost withdrew themselves from the English stage; merely attending those representations in which Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Litchfield, Kemble, and Cooke, performed, or when an actor, or actress made their debut. The English theatre, therefore became, from a place of recreation to men of taste, and an instructive school of art, the rendezvous of young idlers and women of the town; and a ridiculous banquet to the eyes of a certain class of citizens, who are fond of spectacle.

The company is highly respectable

when the bill of fare is good; but on ordinary occasions it would be vain to expect an accomplished audience; and the applause which is bestowed on the most faulty acting, and the most trivial passages in the play, will soon convince an attentive stranger, of the insipidity of the audience, who are certainly far inferior to those of Germany and France. The domestic arrangements of the day in English families is inimical to the theatre. As for the lobby-loungers, their object in going to the play is sufficiently attained, when they make their appearance at eight, nine, and even ten o'clock. How differently do the Parisians act in this respect? They would rather submit to any sacrifice than stay away from the theatre, to which they are passionately attached; the Englishman loves his domestic indulgencies, and only frequents the theatres for want of other amusements.

At Paris thirty theatres are daily opened; in London, only three large and three small ones are opened during the winter; the latter, however, are improperly denominated theatres, as they only exhibit dancers and artists in horsemanship; their representations being so limited. The three large theatres at London, are Drury-lane, Covent-garden, and the Italian Opera.

The actors are never engaged at Drury-lane or Covent-garden for a longer period than the season; at the expiration of which, articles are again entered into at the option of the managers and actors. On this account, the persons of both theatres change perpetually; and much to the prejudice of the art, still more injured by their emigration into the country. The performers of both theatres in London are amazingly numerous. Several performers, as I have previously

observed, confining themselves to a particular line,—tragedy, comedy, or opera; to which is added a troop of dancers.

If we confine ourselves to a consideration of the natural talents of the London actors, without any reference to their acquirements, we find, to our great surprise, that most of them were never intended for the mimic art. I should be glad to know what traces of natural talent are discoverable in Mr. Barrymore for instance; yet he undertakes the most arduous characters with great boldness. But how comes it, that mediocrity, void of talent, occupies so much room on the boards of London? I confess, that I cannot assign any other cause than that the theory is as little known among the English as among the Germans.

The genius of Garrick seemed to fill this vacuum for a considerable

time; he raised the nation above the sphere of common notions, and subjected the natural vocation of an actor to a more rigid ordeal. When that great man left the English stage, Sheridan appeared in his place; but I have previously observed, how little the just expectations of the public were fulfilled.

At first sight a belief might be entertained, that the English actors have fundamentally studied exterior propriety and decorum. Their action, upon the whole, is much more circumscribed than that of the Germans; and they do not so often violate certain rules of deportment. They never turn their backs on the public, and seldom shew their faces in profile, or hide them behind a pocket handkerchief, or their hands; they never approach too rapidly; nor do they unnecessarily touch each other; nor do they

fight with their arms against the public, as if it were a ghost; they never cross their legs in an affected manner, nor stretch them out as a fencing-master, nor twist them as a dancing-master; and such like improprieties, of which many of our German actors cannot wean themselves. An English actor is free from the embarrassment which a German actor frequently suffers when he has nothing to say, and therefore knows not what to do with his dear person. Against such inconveniences an Englishman is secured by the nature of his education, which, from his earliest boyhood takes a free and dignified action.

Nevertheless, I do not hesitate to affirm, that the general rules of decorum are less glaringly transgressed on the German stage, and still less so on the French stage of eminence, than on the boards of Drury-lane and Co-

vent-garden. Indeed what the French term "*Convenances du Theatre*," which imports the correct association of age, character, situation and costume, are so shockingly violated by English performers, as to border on the ridiculous.

My German readers will scarcely credit me if I assure them, that Mrs. Jordan, a lady upwards of forty, with prodigious *embonpoint*, undertakes, in the wretched farce of "*The Virgin Unmasked*," the part of Miss Lucy, a raw country girl of sixteen; so puerile, as to appear playing with her doll. Such a monstrous offence would certainly have inflamed the Parisian public, who would have banished the actress from the theatre; and if she hesitated to retire, I do not doubt but a riot would have ensued. But the audience at London, accustomed to such abominable distortions of cha-

raeter, not only suffer this marvellous representation, which is one of the most grotesque I ever witnessed on the stage, but reward the actress with the loudest, most rapturous and undivided applause. I only mention this single instance among numbers, as I do not think that the violation of theatrical decorum could be more strikingly illustrated.

It is very extraordinary, that the actors dress with less taste on the London stage than in other countries; and the public, which of all other nations pay the most rigid attention to fashion, display incomprehensible indulgence to its violation by the actors. I have seen Mr. Cooke, in the character of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, in "the Man of the World," dressed in a stiff laced coat and waistcoat, such, perhaps, as were used in the reign of Charles the Second, although the ac-

tor must indeed have known, how men of the world, in the present age dress. I cannot, therefore, explain the choice of his dress in any other way, than that tasteless dress must be in fashion on the stage.

But although English actors thus, in many instances, overstep all rules of theatrical decorum, they, on the other hand, conform to certain received laws of deportment with such rigour, that they frequently fall into a most ridiculous affectation. I have previously observed, that the English actors always avoid turning their backs on the public. The true cause of this theatrical deportment is, evidently, that every portraiture on the stage should be perfectly clear and intelligible; and that the audience should never be prevented from reading the expression in the actor's countenance. This rule should be strictly attended to during the

scene, but at the conclusion, its application becomes unnecessary, and the performers might turn from the spectators to leave the stage naturally. The English actors, however, never deviate from that rule, even though they sometimes expose themselves to the most ridiculous situations; and this politeness to the audience dissolves all connections which the author has formed between the performers who are about to leave the stage on different sides. But the English being accustomed to this absurdity, find nothing ridiculous in it.

I have also observed, that the English performers, with the exception of Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Litchfield, Kemble, Cooke, and Wroughton, are guilty of the impropriety of delivering their parts in a very loud voice, that they might be thoroughly intelli-

gible to the audience. A house like Drury-lane indeed, requires peculiar exertions in a common voice, but the actors bawl equally on Covent-garden; and even those of the Little Theatre, in the Haymarket, are alike Stentorian. This is intolerable to a foreigner, who stands close to the stage; especially when such an actress as Miss Pope appears in the character of a talkative woman. Her lungs, indeed, might be a match for all the ladies of the Hall at Paris.

This error may be partly avoided by others as well as by that unrivalled pattern of excellence Mrs. Siddons, in whose declamation no errors, perceptible in the groupe of other performers, are to be found; and if her acting, by the assent of all well educated Englishmen, be classical, it may be decided with great certainty.

how far the other members of the London boards are behind in the declamatory part of the art of acting.

The theory of declamation is not indeed yet established on a solid basis; and many excellent actors frequently attend less to system than to the genuine impulse of their genius; and this study seems to be much more neglected in England than in any other country. In this respect the French differ greatly from the English, for they have penetrated deeply into the laws of declamation. M. Dorfeuille has distinguished himself on this subject. The elements of language are a mere A B C, which every actor of moderate parts ought to understand. Every one knows, that joy speaks in a cheerful tone, as it loves light colours; that grief draws her words from the profundity of the breast; that the voice of anguish is

trembling and interrupted; that the language of passion is rapid; and that meditation moderates the current of speech. These general rules of declamation can only be violated by performers of the worst description. But the situations of the human soul, which are frequently denominated by general language only, appear in a thousand different shades, each of which possesses its peculiar colours and tones. How infinitely varied is the expression of joy; silent, tumultuous, inward, turbulent, tender and soft, strong and wild, dubious, longing and satiated? Who can name its numberless varieties? Dull, agitating, gnawing and consuming grief, differs in expression from that which at once threatens to break the heart and to disembody the soul? How different is the language of playful, keen, refined, energetic, cheerful, melancholy, jovial and dry, wit?

The voice of an actor should always exactly correspond to these different emotions; but it requires great and arduous practice, joined to a refined mind, to attain this excellence. Nor is this the most difficult part of theatrical declamation. Every character possesses, if I may so express myself, a fundamental tone, on which the harmony of the whole is dependant: from this, as from a central point, issue the rays of all the other tones, in which the heart discloses itself. The actor, if he would closely approach nature, must study the fundamental tone of his character in its utmost purity. If the difficulty of this undertaking be considered, it may be thought impracticable: But what cannot be accomplished by the union of genius and perseverance?

In this respect Mrs. Siddons surpasses beyond conception; she not

only possesses all the flexibilities of tone at her command; but she never fails in the fundamental tone of the character, and preserves every expression in the most perfect harmony. In *Isabella*, *Lady Macbeth*, or *Belvidere*, she eminently displays this attribute. Whereas Mr. Kemble certainly does not possess the power of theatrical declamation, as it relates to the modulation of the voice. On this account, the declamation of Mr. Kemble fails to excite that genuine expression of individual feeling which infallibly penetrates into every heart; and having seen him in several characters, a certain uniformity of declamation may be perceived to pervade his general acting. I am of opinion, that, in this respect, Mr. Kemble is surpassed by Mr. Cooke, who, however, is inferior in other parts of the art.

With regard to the other English

performers it may be generally asserted, without injustice, that they (very few excepted) scarcely appear to have conceived the elements of theatrical declamation. How frequently do they violate the first general rules! How many highly disagreeable improprieties of language have most of them contracted! One drawls out the tones; another is all violence and rapidity; another sings his part, and so on; with the detail of which I shall decline to fatigue my readers. Some few observations, however, I do not think unworthy of notice.

The declamation of English actors in tragedy is, in general, far superior to their comedy; which, perhaps, arises from the sublimity of Shakespeare's genius. Actors may also entertain the prevailing prejudice, that declamation, in comedy, is the easiest; and, on this account, they most neg-

lect it. There is, however, a certain kind of comic national character peculiarly distinguished by broad humour, which some actors, especially Fawcett and Suett, have studied with so much attention, that their declamation is perfect. But the English stage does not discover the least traces of those tender comic touches which eminent French actors so very successfully mingle with their declamation. It is certainly true, that most English comedies, although bustling, witty, and humorous, do not possess that refinement and delicacy of the best French comedies; but it cannot be denied, that, owing to the faulty acting of the present English performers, the good points of English original comedies are totally lost to the spectators; and that on account of their erroneous comic declamation. Most comic English pieces are of that

nature, that well exercised actors seldom meet with any difficulty in the declamation; for greater attention is paid to the rapidity of the action than to the dialogue.

The English possess a great number of comedies of intrigue, but very few of character, and none at all of that kind of refined comedy which the French have latterly produced. This may be explained from the manner of writing, and from the different characters of both nations. A dramatist, who draws his plot, not in the region of fancy, but from real life, is circumscribed by the times, and the prevailing forms of existing society. Poetical licence, indeed, allows him to beautify and improve the subject; but the ground-features of his portrait must be natural. But where is he in the real world to find character, except in the exaggerated culture of manners,

which involves men in the most singular contradictions and follies? for here the ridiculous appear in the most astonishing and refined masks. The fashionable world in France was formerly an instructive school to the French authors. There they found characters, whose comic originality, if it may be so called, was the work of society itself, and, therefore, excellently adapted to the theatre. Independent of the cameleon-forms of courtiers, who change their colours in comparatively greater variety among the French than other nations, the formation of characters has never been decided by social nations. Nor have social forms been spun to that degree among the higher classes in England as in France. The great in England generally lived much more simply, naturally in a more isolated state than was the custom in the French fashion-

able world. The high comic sphere thus remained closed to the English poet. There certainly exists in England an amazing multiplicity of original characters : they are, however, in general, totally insulated. A dramatist, therefore, who endeavours to produce them on the stage, must be extremely cautious that he does not violate the laws of probability. He cannot produce a general interest in the comic parts of such characters on an audience who has had no share in their formation : these originals are, therefore, generally introduced in comedies of intrigue by the best English authors.

If we apply general observation on the theatrical diction of English actors to individuals, it will appear, that they generally succeed best in tragedy, where the actor is impelled by the velocity of the passions ; but pathos, cooled by reflection, sinks, in most

actors, to the freezing point. Of this, however, Cooke and Kemble afford a very creditable exception; although the latter does not always preserve an equal height, but, at times, falls into a plaintive tone, wholly devoid of energy. These two eminent actors also distinguish themselves to admiration in transitions and exclamation, in which English actors of mediocrity generally fail. In both instances, a performer must shew whether he can govern himself; and in these the sustained energy must be admired with which Kemble and Cooke pourtray the transition from one passion to another. Yet, the voice of Kemble, at times, sinks beneath its proper level, when hurried from tumultuous to tranquil expressions. In exclamation they are both excellent patterns. Many exclamations are introduced by authors merely to fill up, or as pauses; they

are, therefore, very properly called, in the French theatrical language, "*interjections mortes*." Inferior, nay, at times, even eminent actors, pronounce exclamations, which should never sound long, contrary to the prescribed rules of declamation, and thereby render their acting very unnatural and affected. This I have never remarked in Cooke or Kemble; they both most skilfully animate those exclamations, in which the soul, unable to express its emotions comprehensively, breathes tones that never fail to force their way to the heart. They also never destroy the great effect of these exclamations by extending the tone to the words immediately following. For as a flame, which suddenly bursts forth in all its force, burns feebly in the next moment; the tone of voice should sink after those exclamations

in which the soul hath compassed its most powerful expression.

The English actors are peculiarly expressive in those tragical tones, which picture the commotion of the soul when agitated by passion, the force of decision and expanded energy. Wrath, wild grief, despair, glowing hatred, and thirsting revenge, are expressed with unrivalled effect by the eminent English actors. They are truly great in most situations where man, with obstinate audacity, dares to contest his will with Fate. They also succeed very happily in the tone of immoderate passion, which, stifled and suppressed, afterwards bursts forth with increased fury. They are matchless in that hollow language of the mind, which is peculiar to man in the moment he shudders at his own image; and perhaps on no other stage

those convulsive tones, in which the bursting soul sighs forth its torments, are uttered with so much effect. But an attentive observer cannot fail to remark, that the English do not usually succeed in expressing soft and inward emotions. They seem wholly unacquainted with the tender tones of love, the warm effusions of friendship, and those modulated expressions by which man endeavours to open his heart, and harmoniously to associate with a congenial soul. Even Kemble and Cooke, in these respects, display neither nature nor truth; and the warmest language of love, friendship, and confidence, as given by the poet, freezes on their lips. The English actresses, with the exception of Mrs. Powell, totally abjure nature; their coldness and affectation, when they should be all emotion, are insupportable.

It may, therefore, be easily concluded, how wretchedly many parts in comedy must be sustained on the English stage; some representations, indeed, are beneath all criticism: and English actors, in general, do not possess a natural easy tone of conversation; they offend more in this than any other respect against the rules of good declamation. To this may be added, that most of them have contracted unnatural habits, which they might certainly avoid if they studied so to do: thus, for instance, their manner of pronouncing sentences is wholly erroneous. A sententious expression is no doubt rendered difficult to an actor from the insipidity of several modern authors, who apply it in improper places; but the theatrical art must always be offended, whenever sentences are pronounced as if they were directed

to the public, which English actors always do. This error is also frequently perceptible in the French theatres; and both nations seem to encourage the actors, since they catch with avidity the sentences, and accompany them with thundering plaudits. It is therefore gratifying to the actors, whenever they can in appearance divide the applause with the author, and march off the stage with a fine sentence. To this manner of delivering sentences is another fault attached: the English actors generally speak in a height and measure of voice, which is foreign to the natural expression of speech. This entirely destroys the tone of conversation, and gives to their acting an unnatural stiffness, which is particularly detrimental to theatrical illusion. And they further commit a fault against the rules of the tone of conversation, by sinking

their voice in passages where they are interrupted, as if they *expected* the interruption. Nothing weakens the conversation, and injures the truth of the tone so much as this fault, which, perhaps, proceeds from the negligent manner in which they rehearse on the English stage.

If we compare the declamation of English actors with their powers in the picturesque part of the art, it will be evident, that they have acquired a superior degree of excellence in the latter; this, however, can be said of first-rate actors only. Hence it may be presumed, that the eye of the English judges the actors rather than the ear; this is particularly favourable to the female performers, who, in general, discover little professional science.

The picturesque in the art of acting consists in the dumb-play, gesti-

culations, grouping, &c. during the combined action of several performers. Excellent as some first-rate English actors are in those scenes, they are not, however, equally skilled in all. In tragedy Cooke and Kemble maintain the first rank in this respect. The countenance of Kemble is the noblest and most refined; but the muscles are not so much at command as Cooke's are, who is also a first-rate comedian; but Kemble almost wholly rejects the comic muse. Both are most excellent in the gradual changes of the countenance; in which the inward emotions of the soul are depicted and interwoven as they flow from the mind. In this excellence I cannot compare any German actors, whom I have seen, with them, unless it be Issland and Christ; among French tragedians, even Talma and Lafond are far inferior to them.

In comedy, King, Wroughton, Fawcett, Suett, and Bannister, possess great powers in dumb-play : they have, however, paid too little regard to dignified expression ; and, therefore, frequently fall into low buffooneries, even though their part does not require it. I shall pass the other actors, and merely observe, that some of them, from too great zeal for dumb-play, have applied themselves to grotesque distortions of the face ; in which Messrs. Wewitzer, Palmer, and others, have acquired no small degree of celebrity, which enable them always to entertain the galleries.

With regard to gesticulation, most English performers possess a great pre-eminence over those of Germany ; and certain faulty habits in gesticulation, as ridiculous as habitual expressions, are less often discovered in English than in German performers ; from

which it appears, that they possess greater talent for tragedy than comedy.

In gesticulation, adapted to the expression of any violent passion, they leave nothing to wish for; but they are destitute of that graceful ease so inimitably belonging to the French actors.

The English actors, upon the whole, are much too solemn in gesticulation for comedy. An English lover in comedy is generally a very *sorry* creature on the stage, whatever the author may have intended. Most of them express, in their movements as well as in their tone, a sentimental gravity, which would not be amiss if they were to make their appearance before a clergyman as candidates for the holy state of matrimony. The actresses (a very few excepted) are completely faulty in their gesticulations; they are either wholly destitute

of this kind of bye-acting; or they have appropriated to themselves the mere gesticulations of nature. I know very well, that many of them meet with frequent opportunities of mixing in the fashionable world; and that some of them, in spite of their want of beauty, number princes among their adorers; nor do I doubt, that they can appear much more amiable off the stage. It is, therefore, the more inconceivable, that they delight in presenting to the public eye the contrast of female grace and elegance.

It is, however, merely justice to state, that Kemble undoubtedly maintains a high rank, in this respect, on the English stage. His positions are throughout picturesque and dignified in a superior degree; and although Cooke surpasses him in dumb-play, the latter neither possesses that rounded flowing gesticulation, nor that beauti-

fully picturesque position, which distinguishes Mr. Kemble, of whom it may truly be said, that he has appropriated to himself the beautiful and picturesque to such a degree, that art seems nature in him. His positions and movements leave nothing for the painter to wish; yet his exertions are not apparent. Every action is grace, and to a degree of superiority over the celebrated French actors Talma and Lafond, whose acting, however picturesque, bears evident marks of studied measure.

Although, as must appear to the reader from my previous remarks, the English performers, upon the whole, have bestowed greater attention and study on the picturesque part of their art than on declamation, they, however, evince little skill in their groupings; so that they frequently neglect opportunities of producing an animated

and harmonious picture at the conclusion of an interesting scene. In this the French actors possess great talent; they never fail to embrace such opportunities as may give effect to the whole by the beauty of picturesque acting. An English actor always seems to be looking for his colleagues, when he enters into conversation with them.

From these general remarks on the picturesque and musical part of English acting, the reader may deduce the poetical; by which I understand the manner in which a character is conceived and sustained, for this chiefly depends on the poetical spirit of the performer. English actors aim little at generality in their characters; they seek to establish their reputation in a limited way, without ever taking the trouble to attempt surmounting any difficulties in the wide field of their

theatrical career. Even the most eminent among them, Kemble and Cooke, merely appear to have aspired to one point, without stimulating their ambition to a superior object. It certainly is very commendable, that an actor should display modesty in giving range to his attempts; but it cannot, at the same time, be denied, that scarcely any department in the art can be so limited as not to require the perfection of opposite talents, which nature herself but seldom distributes to her favourites in equal measure: this is, perhaps, never so generally the case in any art as in that of acting. An actor, although his principal forte lies in tragedy, will not, however, totally neglect the comic muse; since he must understand the different ways of expressing the human affections. This does not seem to be sufficiently attended to by English performers of the first emi-

nence. They certainly rise to an extraordinary height in such parts as they are peculiarly adapted to fill; but they generally sink as low in other instances wherein they ought to have subdued an adverse nature. I have particularly observed this at three different representations of Richard the Third, a favourite play with the English, at Covent-garden, the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, and on the Dublin stage. Cooke performed the part, which is unanimously considered his *chef d'œuvre*; he even surpasses Kemble. It may be said, that this actor has entirely adopted the individuality of Richard the Third, and that he delineates this horrid character with a depth of skill which cannot be surpassed in those scenes where Richard is undisguised: but he seldom represented him faithfully, and some times failed, where the crook-backed tyrant assumes the mask of dis-

simulation. This happened particularly in the second scene of the first act, where Richard, by means of sweet flattery, wins the love of Lady Anne. This is the greatest triumph of Richard's dissimulation, which he himself conceives so astonishing, that he exults in his unlooked-for success at the end of the scene. Shakespeare has, in this excellent speech, furnished Richard with the most eloquent expressions of a glowing romantic love. Richard being deformed and stained by the blackest crimes, the passion which is delineated in his looks, and every word that he pronounces, must render him amiable in the eyes of Lady Anne; his dissimulation should, therefore, wear the garb of truth, if the scene, by its improbability, is not intended to offend the spectators. In this Cooke did not by any means reach his part; his voice and gesticulation denoted a

palpable hypocrite, whom the most common observer must discover, and against whom every feeling, not totally blunted, must revolt ; there was, therefore, a striking contradiction between the tone of the actor and the words of the poet. Instead of courting all the aid of melody to grace his lust, Cooke had only one tone and one mien—the slowly-drawn tone of a hypocrite, and the mien of dissimulation, both contrary to the spirit of the part. But how, it may be asked, could so great a performer thus glaringly violate the truth of acting? This can only be explained in the following manner :—Cooke has expanded his astonishingly happy talent of representing the savage and ferocious sides of human nature with a kind of partiality, which makes him appear unnatural where he is obliged to become a more gentle human being:

This want of harmony renders it difficult for an actor to represent a character with purity: the difficulty, however, decreases in proportion as the character is drawn feebly. But if a great poet has bestowed on a character the individuality of animated nature, the actor can only be enabled to form a just conception of the character by forgetting his own. An actor will easily succeed in the solution of this problem, which is, of all others, the most difficult, if his own genius be versatile and harmonious. But if any particular quality has gained an ascendant in his fancy, this will involuntarily divert him from nature; and he probably will fail altogether. Even the most eminent of English performers are frequently betrayed into these errors. Garrick, strained every effort to counteract this kind of partiality in his pupils; and his great example, perhaps, con-

tributed the most. In tragedy Mrs. Siddons might succeed him, but the elevated genius of this great actress does not seem to serve as a conductor to English performers.

Another restraint, from which English performers cannot free themselves, is, their being too much governed by the public, if I may so express myself. It must be allowed, that Kemble and Cooke also here possess great merits; but it is at times observable that they dare not wholly follow the bent of their own genius, and that they for moments abjure truth and nature, in order to produce an effect, which the prevailing taste of the public expects. English actors of the second and third class evidently study the character of their part merely with a view to theatrical effect; on which account very few of them do justice to the poet. It must,

however, be admitted, that they evince a more pure and free enthusiasm in tragedy than in comedy : in the latter they sink much beneath the standard prescribed by the poet ; but in tragedy the reverse is the case. The stranger who first sees a comedy acted on the English stage, cannot but conceive a very mean opinion of the histrionic accomplishments of English actors ; and he will, therefore, feel an extraordinary surprise on the representation of one of Shakspeare's plays. In comedy the English actors frequently take the liberty to parody the characters ; but in tragedy they shew more respect for the author.

Hence, perhaps, it arises, that English actors less seldom fail in sustaining a tragic than a comic character. To sustain a character requires chiefly steady, uninterrupted, and poetical inspiration, on the part of the actor ; if

this becomes exhausted, his acting must lose the colour of truth. But it is at the same time necessary, that the actor should know how to govern himself, and that he tune himself to the fundamental tone of the character. He must likewise, if I may so express myself, enter into the temperature of the character; but it requires a thorough study of the part and refined observation. In this, eminent actors shine with the greatest advantage: for performers of mediocrity may surpass expectation in delineating single scenes and particular features; but to sustain a character throughout with harmonious uniformity, can only be done by an actor who combines genius with study.

The liberties which the English performers take in comedy, with the sanction of the public, completely destroy all harmony of representation.

Some comic characters, however, are delineated with great truth and nature by Suett and Fawcett; and in tragedy Kemble and Cooke distinguish themselves highly in this respect. The colouring of individual life which the poet breathes into a character, does not appear so strong in the representations of Kemble, although he understands better how to produce picturesque beauties than Cooke. It has also appeared to me, that Cooke displays in his acting a higher degree of poetical steadiness than Kemble, who, perhaps, at times, fails in sustaining the character. Kemble, as has been previously remarked, sometimes yields to the natural impediments of his feeble organ; and fails in the fundamental tone of the character; but he, on the other hand, displays, comparatively, a much superior degree of delicacy throughout his acting than Cooke; and he

succeeds in expressing numerous tender traits in characters, with a delicacy and grace which Cooke can never attain. I am ready to allow, that in making these and previous observations on these two distinguished performers, it ought to be considered, that both have superior merit; but who can refrain from wishing, that what is truly excellent might attain perfection?

If we compare the London theatres with the German and French, the following will be the result:—With respect to perfection in the art, a much greater disproportion exists between tragedy and comedy on the English, than on the German and French stages. The French maintain the first rank in comedy; they are followed, although at some distance, by the Germans; and the English are still farther behind. But in tragedy, the English, even at this period, when their stage is on the

decline, maintain a proud pre-eminence. Mrs. Siddons stands on a summit that cannot be reached; and no French tragic performer can be compared to Kemble and Cooke. Among the Germans, Issland alone may pretend to equal rank; and indeed he surpasses them in versatility of powers. Owing to the combined excellence of Mrs. Siddons and her brother Kemble, Macbeth and some other tragedies are performed in a style no German or French theatre can aspire to rival. In tragedy, the English display greater regularity and dignity than the Germans, and they are much more unrestrained by conventional forms than the French. But the Germans and French display a much more cordial and warm enthusiasm in behalf of the art than the English. It cannot be denied, that progress is discoverable among the Germans, a stagnation with the French;

and a decline with the English ; which seems to threaten the total destruction of the scenic art, unless the present system of insipidity is superseded by more rational amusements.

I shall conclude these general observations with a few remarks on Mr. Kemble and Mr. Cooke.

Kemble is the favourite, nay, the idol of the public at London ; few, very few, venture to proclaim his partial inferiority to Cooke : such an assertion would be even hazardous in the company of the ladies, who, upon all occasions, espouse the cause of Kemble with warmth. Kemble has a very graceful manly figure, is perfectly well made, and his naturally commanding stature appears extremely dignified in every picturesque position, which he studies most assiduously. His face is one of the noblest I ever saw on any stage, being a fine oval, exhibiting a handsome Roman nose, a well-formed

and closed mouth; his fiery and somewhat romantic eyes retreat as it were, and are shadowed by bushy eyebrows; his front is open and little vaulted; his chin prominent and rather pointed; and his features so softly interwoven, that no deeply-marked line is perceptible. His physiognomy, indeed, commands at first sight; since it denotes, in the most expressive manner, a man of refined sentiment, enlightened mind, and correct judgment. Without the romantic look in his eyes, the face of Kemble would be that of a well-bred, cold, and selfish man of the world; but this look, from which an ardent fancy emanates, softens the point of the chin and the closeness of the mouth. His voice is pleasing, but feeble; of small compass, but extreme depth. This is,

as has been previously observed, the greatest natural impediment with which he, to whom nature has been thus bountiful, has still to contend.

Cooke does not possess the elegant figure of Kemble; but his countenance beams with great expression. The most prominent features in the physiognomy of Cooke are a long and somewhat hooked nose, a pair of fiery and expressive eyes, a lofty and somewhat broad front, and the lines of his muscles which move the lips, are pointedly marked. His countenance is certainly not so dignified as that of Kemble, but it discovers greater passion; and few actors are, perhaps, capable of delineating, in more glowing colours, the storm of a violent passion, than Cooke. His voice is powerful, and of great compass; a pre-eminence which he possesses over Kemble, of which he

skilfully avails himself. His exterior movements are, by far, inferior in the picturesque to those of Kemble.

I have already stated, with candour, my opinion of the figures of the actresses generally; which open, although far from gallant confession, differs greatly from the panegyric of the newspapers; which, throughout the year, blaze forth the beauty, loveliness, and fascinating grace of the female performers.

The London audience seem to have relaxed very much from the severity with which, according to most travellers and the biographies of celebrated actors, it formerly judged its theatrical heroes. No one certainly can disapprove the abolition of some customs; for instance, that of pelting with oranges; but it might almost be wished, that those customs had been preserved, if, as is affirmed, they con-

tributed to expel or to chastise bad actors. At present the public of London evince a patience, which borders on the heroic; it is severe only when actors violate the adopted rules of deportment, or when they are not perfect in their parts; an error, however, which seldom occurs. The gallery indeed now and then exercises its authority less over the actors, however, than the orchestra, which seems to be under their direction. I was once at Drury-lane when two sailors made their appearance at the orchestra as delegates from the gallery, and ordered the leader of the band to play "Rule Britannia," which command was instantly complied with. The fashionables often throng behind the scenes of the Italian opera to lounge and chatter with the female dancers, which custom becomes frequently very troublesome, the stage not being large. Some-

times, indeed, the beaux cross the stage in parties; upon which occasion the gallery never omits to signify its loud displeasure. I remember once to have seen a young man of fashion in great embarrassment; he was pushed upon the stage, was unable to retreat, and yet the gallery continued to insist upon his removal. At length a truly Stentorian voice called out, "I say! you little fellow in the white waistcoat and black breeches, be off! Don't you hear?" The audience burst into loud laughter, and the gentleman, highly alarmed at this thundering command, retired, in evident consternation, behind a distant scene. Sometimes the actors take similar liberties with the public. I was once at the little theatre in the Haymarket, when two gentlemen in a box quarrelled, to the great annoyance of the company, there being no police to preserve the quiet of

the theatres, till they proceeded from words to blows. While they were boxing the uproar was so great, that neither the spectators could understand the actors nor the actors each other. Upon which Fawcett came forward, and raising his voice, called out, "Hey day! be quiet!" The audience laughed at and applauded Fawcett, and an end was put to the tumult by one of the parties being boxed out into the lobbies.

The public of London testifies the same cordial enthusiasm with which the Parisians receive their great performers. On their appearing in the first scene, Mrs. Siddons, Kemble, and Cooke, are greeted with loud plaudits; in return for which they make their grateful obeisance. This also happens at Paris when Talma, Lafond, Fleury, and Mad. Contat, or other favourites, make their appearance. But the Lon-

dōners differ from the Parisians in this respect; they display more humanity and encouragement to *debutters* on the stage. At Paris, a performer's first appearance is frequently decisive of his future theatrical career. This could not easily happen at London, for the English display, on these occasions, a degree of lenity which does honour to their hearts. I witnessed the *debut* of a young lady at Drury-lane, who did not appear altogether qualified to shine on the stage. Her figure was not very pleasing, nor was her face handsome. Her voice was destitute of requisite force, and every movement proclaimed a want either of element or talent. I am convinced, that so bold an attempt would have roused the indignation of a Parisian audience, and a hundred voices would have been raised against the actress: but the Londoners fol-

lowed the impulse of generous pity ; the more evident the embarrassment of the poor girl, the more loud were the plaudits to inspire her with confidence. I remember, that in one scene her memory failed, which is an error least pardonable in a performer, and her consternation became so great, that she seemed ready to faint ; when suddenly the applause of the audience rose to such a degree, that it might have been supposed the performer had displayed every mark of excellence. In such moments the scenes on the stage must vanish in the eyes of a foreigner, and his heart only feels the moving impression produced by this exercise of benevolence, which is depicted in the countenance of every spectator. Affected by this amiable trait in the national character, he forgets that this very levity has, perhaps, raised many a performer of moderate talent to an

undeserved situation. For all claims on art must be silent when the superior interest of the heart is satisfied.

Neither of the great English theatres possess a certain number of spectators, on whose visits they may calculate with certainty; an advantage which all the theatres at Paris enjoy. In the pit of the "*Théâtre Français*" may always be found a number of old Frenchmen, who have for upwards of thirty years shared the joys and sorrows of the company. They know the history of this theatre in its minutest details, and no weak or excellent point in the actors has escaped them. Their judgment carries great weight with it; and this may, perhaps, be the cause why the pit, which is their rendezvous, has always remained the place in the French theatre, whence the legislative power of the house issued its irrevocable decrees on poets

and actors. This circumstance has, perhaps, more than any other contributed to preserve the regular form of the French theatre, proceeding from the theory of the theatrical art, to which the French have remained invariably faithful since the time of Moliere. This old race of French theatrical critics is, however, frequently heard to sigh at their insipid age. The English theatre never possessed the advantage of such solid criticism; for the English are either destitute of a theoretical knowledge in theatrical affairs, or their enthusiasm for the beauties of the scenic art is very lukewarm. Nor does the English public evince any particular constancy in the approbation which it bestows on one or the other of the theatres. This may, however, proceed from the perpetual interchange of the companies at both theatres; which change

is certainly highly detrimental to the progress of the art; as is the circumstance, that in England the gallery, and not the pit, carries the decisive voice.

The patience of an English audience is exemplary; even the longest pieces of Shakspeare do not appear long enough, but they require some further entertainment; this consists in small operas, farces, divertisements, and pantomimes, which generally are uncommonly wretched.

The theatre at Drury-lane is a gigantic but unfinished building; the exterior presents no master-piece of architecture. It is intended to add a large wing, which is to contain a magnificent hotel, coffee-houses, &c. The interior is spacious and tasteful, and blazoned with fifty small lustres with wax lights. However expensive this lighting may be, the lamp-lustres of

Argand produce a far more splendid effect in the theatres of Paris. Drury-lane may contain nearly 4000 spectators; and is consequently far more capacious than the largest French and German theatres.

Covent-garden theatre is not half so roomy as Drury-lane, and is extremely plain and unadorned; it has four tiers of boxes, and contains nearly sixteen hundred spectators. The royal family usually go to Covent-garden; and it is thought a rare exception from the rule when his Majesty visits Drury-lane. The King has no box of his own at either theatre, but pays thirty pounds for three boxes every time, which are then most superbly fitted up by the managers.

That part of the English public which delights in spectacle, requires rapid successions of decoration. As this, however, is attended with considerable

expendence, and the public are less anxious about excellence than novelty, the managers entrust the theatrical painting to artists of moderate talent. The chief object of English dances and pantomimes seems to be, the entertainment of the public by an incredible number of rapid transformations : but all would be disappointed, who expected to find skill in the arrangement of a dance, or ingenious and poetical fancy in a pantomime ; for it may be confidently asserted, that the tastelessness in the former, and insipidity in the latter, could not be exceeded.

The English operas are certainly superior to these wretched pantomimes ; but with regard to dramatic merit, they are as certainly inferior to the French and even German. Of their musical merit I am unable to judge ; but their poetical merit is wretched

beyond conception, and the acting perfectly correspondent.

Mrs. Billington has no cause to complain of the ingratitude of her nation; her annual receipts in salary, benefits, public and private concerts, amounting to upwards of six thousand pounds. The great Mrs. Siddons, on the contrary, by her divine acting, acquires, as I have been informed, not more than four thousand pounds. Drury-lane has lost both these performers, the latter being now at Covent-garden, and the former at the Italian opera, which is still one of the most magnificent theatres possible. Its interior is somewhat old fashioned, and contains five tiers of boxes. The gallery and pit are very capacious, and the house holds about three thousand persons. All the boxes are let for the winter to families of the first con-

sequence, and many persons purchase a silver ticket, which admits one to the pit; where the best society of London assembles.

The Italian singers, male and female, whom I saw on this stage, distinguished themselves by good action; which is uncommon with the Italians. But the Italian opera would instantly be abandoned, notwithstanding the talents of the singers and the beauty of the music, if dancing were not the powerful magnet which attracts the Londoners. All Italian operas are, therefore, abridged, divertisements introduced between the acts, and the ballet considerably lengthened, in order to gratify the public taste.

It is well known that excellent dancers receive very considerable encouragement from the English; the first artists at Paris, therefore, generally pass some time on the Italian stage at London.

Dancing has at this theatre attained a high degree of perfection, and well painted and well arranged decorations are frequently brought forward. The great ballets at Paris are indeed far superior to those of London with regard to pomp of decoration, and the exterior of the whole in conformity with the rules of art. The theatre at Paris possesses a far greater number of excellent dancers of both sexes than that of London; and its statists and figurants are comparatively more skilful than on the latter, where, by improper action, they frequently destroy the fine effect of the whole. But the opera at London may boast one dancer with whom no Parisian can be compared: Mademoiselle Parisot seems born to paint that dignified female grace, which furnishes omnipotence to the beauty of woman. Her acting proves what art may effect by beautiful sim-

plicity. She never makes use of those *tricks de force* with which the best female dancers at Paris still endeavour to shine. Every step of Mad. Parisot is marked by the greatest truth and dignity of nature. Every one of her movements is expressive, spirited, and harmonious. Madame Hilligsberg, who possesses the first rank among the dancers of London, is a woman of distinguished merit: she succeeds with peculiar happiness in sportive and jocose expressions, and she is bewitchingly graceful as a Welch or Scotch country girl. Her figure is very handsome; but her arms are somewhat long and thin. The third dancer is Madame Laborie; she possesses an agreeable figure, much animation and native gracefulness. She might become a first-rate dancer she did not trust too much to her natural talents, and bestowed more attention on the art. D'Egville, Laborie,

and St. Pierre, are excellent dancers and fine manly figures. Laborie possesses more elegance than St. Pierre; but the latter greater animation. D'Egville displays much taste and poetical spirit in the invention of his ballets. I do not doubt that the groups are more artificially arranged in the ballets at Paris than by the English master of ballets; but those at London are far richer in ~~live~~ situations, and possess a more free poetical spirit than those of Paris. Of all the ballets which I have seen at Paris, I know none to be compared, with respect to ingenious and pleasing invention, with Paul and Virginia, the Country Coquette, Paphos besieged by the Scythians, and some other ballets at London. The ballets at Paris; for instance, the much admired Telemachus, contains, in individual scenes, a greater number of picturesque beauties; but these do not form such a

pleasing *tout-ensemble* as those of London. The interest of the action, which combines those individual situations, is weak, or, perhaps, not to be found in the former; but in the latter it is preserved with spirit: the former are frequently loaded with the arts of a dancing-master; the latter are more simple and tasteful.

The interior of the small theatres is very neat. The Royal Circus has only one tier of boxes, but a well sized pit, and contains about three hundred spectators. The Amphitheatre lately, and a second time burnt down, was more capacious; it had two tiers of boxes. The theatre at Sadlers-wells is pleasantly situated, and neatly embellished. It has two tiers of boxes, and the stage is tolerably large; its decorations are better than those of the other small theatres. Independent of pantomimes, the audiences of the Royal,

Circus, and Astley's, are entertained with feats of horsemanship, which a certain class of Londoners cannot see too often.

A foreigner, who is unprepared for it, cannot fail to experience considerable surprise, when he finds, that during the summer months, all large and small theatres are shut up in London; a Parisian would at first imagine, that a general fast was rigidly observed during that period. There is, however, one theatre open, of which I will caution my readers not to form any lofty ideas; for they will find, to their utter amazement, that this theatre, to which upwards of a million of inhabitants must resort, is smaller than any of the better description on the Boulevards at Paris. Indeed it is scarcely to be credited, that the pleasures of the theatre should be forgotten so long in the most opulent city in the uni-

verse, where luxury has collected every thing that can flatter the senses; but this is the case with the summer theatre at the Hay-market; and even this theatre, which can scarcely contain four hundred persons, is not, at times, full. It would frequently stand entirely empty, if it did not serve as a general rendezvous to the girls in the vicinity of Leicester-square, and their enamourates, who occupy all parts of the house. The comedians who usually perform here are actors from Drury-lane and Covent-garden, who either have not looked for, or found engagements in the country during the summer.

This indifference in the Londoners to the theatre may lead to a supposition, that the number of their private theatres is not very considerable. There certainly are some, but they are limited to a small class of *élégantes*, who oc-

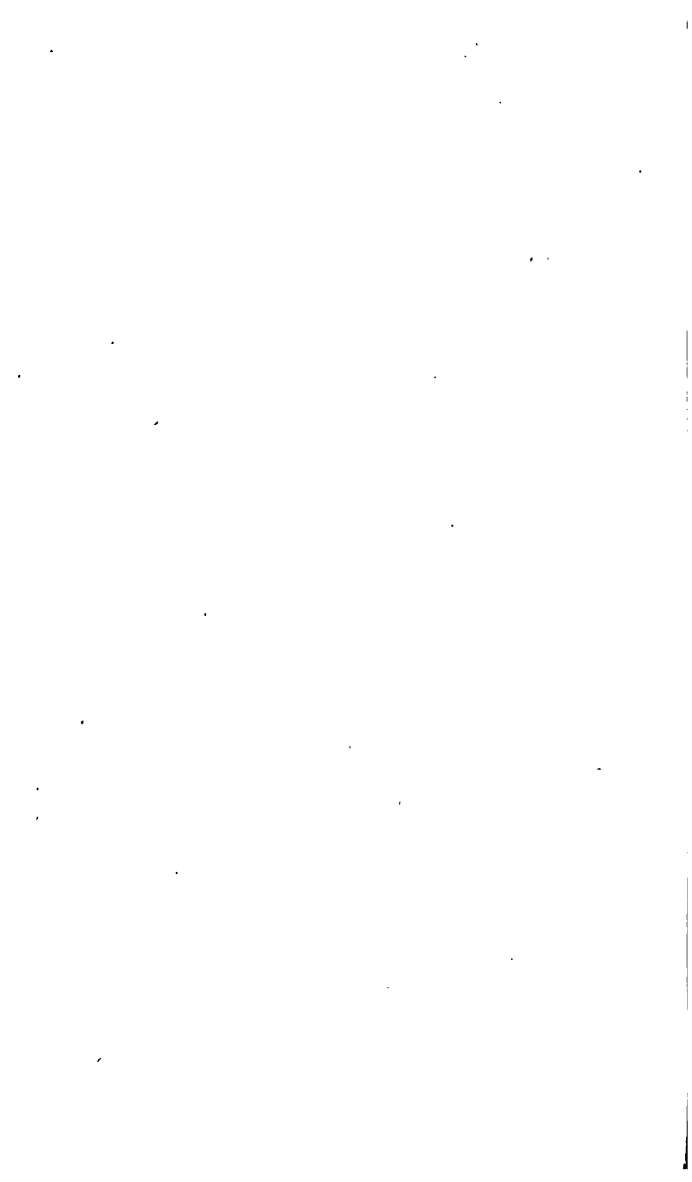
casionally perform; they have no particular theatre, but hire any large room for the purpose. I neglected the opportunity of attending one of these performances. I know only of three companies of theatrical amateurs in London; one of which is distinguished by performing French pieces only. Mr. Taxier, a well known excellent lecturer, conducts this theatre, in which several pieces, written by himself, are performed. None of these companies have hitherto attempted tragedy; they perform comedy and farce. The theatrical amusements conclude with a ball, in which the spectators join.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.















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